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**FAITH IN A
FUTURE LIFE**



**FAITH IN A
FUTURE LIFE**

Books by the Same Author

Faith in a Future Life
(Foundations)

Great Religious Teachers of the East

The Life of Jesus
In the Light of the Higher Criticism

The Dawn of Christianity
(Sequel to the preceding)

Ideals of Life
From the Bibles of the Great Religions.

PREFATORY NOTE

On the Sunday evenings of the winter months in 1915, at the Meeting House of the Society for Ethical Culture of New York, I gave a series of eight lectures on Modern Occultism. The course included the following subjects: Modern Occultism and the Ethical Attitude Toward It, The Causes of Modern Occultism, Spiritualism and Its Cardinal Claim, Psychical Research and Its Results, Foundations for the Faith in a Future Life, Theosophy and Reincarnation, Christian Science in Its Relation to Jesus as Healer, A Candid Examination of Christian Science.

Only in its generic sense, as defined in the Century Dictionary, was the word "occultism" used. The aim of the course was expository, critical, constructive. It sought to sketch the origin and development of each of these modern movements, to set forth its distinctive characteristics, to indicate its contribution to religious thought, to show in what respects its main position seemed open to criticism.

This book is *not* a reproduction of those lectures. They were delivered without manuscript and the thought of extending my notes for publication was at no time entertained. But the receipt of several hundred signed applications for a book that should con-

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tain at least a portion of the course, particularly what had been said on the subject of immortality and the various grounds on which thinkers have supported their faith in it, prompted the preparation of what is herein presented.

Be it understood, then, that the following chapters reproduce, not the original lectures but only the *substance of certain parts of six* in the series. It seemed necessary to say these preliminary words lest any of those who formed part of my friendly audience should expect to find here verbal reproduction of what they then heard.

'ALFRED W. MARTIN.

New York.

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**FAITH IN A
FUTURE LIFE**

INTRODUCTION

have been converted from thoroughfares to *cults-de-sac*.

There are those who have arrived at the belief in personal immortality through intellectual speculation; those who have reached the faith at a single bound by intuition; those who have accepted it directly from the New Testament; those who, by one or another form of *psychic* experience, have attained the belief. Then again, there are those who have gotten it as the result of *moral* experience.

Approaching the subject from a standpoint that is independent, free, nonsectarian, let us examine these various foundations on which the faith in a future life has been built; let us ask of each, does it actually give the support that has been claimed for it, does it satisfy both the head and the heart, does it meet the test to which candid, impartial truth-seeking puts it?

Permit me, before proceeding, to register my abhorrence of dogmatism in dealing with this question of immortality. Dogmatism may be defined as affirmation without valid evidence, assertion without reasons. A dogma is a proposition pronounced true on the basis of some authority too sacred to be interrogated—an undebatable proposition. The dogmatist is one

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who says that no question can be opened which the Bible has closed—as though any question could ever be closed as long as anyone is competent to reopen it. The dogmatist is one who holds that certain beliefs are too sacred to be questioned—as though the very sanctity of a belief did not depend, in part at least, upon its verification. Dogmatism sometimes takes the form of foreclosing further investigation, as when Professor Münsterberg said of the alleged facts of Spiritism, “They do not exist and *never can exist.*”¹

Nor, again, am I a whit less strongly opposed to sentimentalism than to dogmatism. I, for one, am utterly unwilling to satisfy my heart at the expense of my head, to sacrifice reason for the sake of faith, albeit that I recognize the place where knowledge fails and faith holds sway. If the temple of the immortal hope be not spacious enough to hold both my head and my heart, I shall stay outside and wait for more satisfying evidence of what I devoutly hope is true. Dear as is the word immortality to me, — there is one word dearer still—truth. Deep as is my desire for personal survival of death, my desire not to be deceived, not to be fooled, is

¹ Münsterberg: “Psychology and Life,” p. 253.

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deeper still. There are those, I know, who have grown so to love the beliefs taught them in childhood, "at mother's knee," that they prefer to hold to them even though they were proved erroneous. But parents are never honored or revered by such deliberate indifference to discovered truth. "Why should disillusionment," asks Maeterlinck, "distress you if you are a man of honest intention? Disillusions we treat with scant justice yet they are really the first smiles of truth. The more disillusionments fall at your feet the more surely and nobly will the great reality shine on you." Surely the deepest passion of the soul must be to know the truth, whatever it may be, and then calmly, loyally to adjust oneself to it. The prayer of Ajax was for light; there can be no nobler prayer. It will be well if, at the outset, a word be said by way of defining the principal terms of our subject—immortality, foundation, faith, soul.

By "immortality" we mean personal, conscious survival of death, conscious of our identity with our present earthly life; for, without memory immortality would have no more practical significance for us than belief in the persistence and indestructibility of matter. In other words, we mean by immortality more than

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the mere generality, entertained by McTaggart and Bradley, following Hegel, that "no spiritual energy is ever lost" but is "sustained regardless of the persistence of personality." Without that persistence, immortality, as we shall use the word, would be meaningless.

To have a strong, stable, enduring foundation for one's faith is a matter of fundamental concern. Anyone can believe in immortality. In mere belief there is no virtue. Yet we sometimes hear it said that it is a disgrace not to believe in immortality. We all have known pious persons who, with a pained expression, have remarked of certain free-thinkers, "How shocking that they do not believe in a future life." But their avowed agnosticism may have much more merit than the unquestioning acceptance of inherited belief. The ultimate point of importance is on what ground do you believe or disbelieve and in what vital relation does your creed or your skepticism stand to your daily life? Apart from these considerations the belief and denial are alike of no genuine worth. Before we can ascribe any value to another's belief in immortality we must needs know the foundation on which it rests, "the reason for the faith that is in him." Transcendent im-

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portance therefore attaches to the *basis* of belief. We speak of the *faith* in a future life and rightly so, refraining from application of the word knowledge to our thought concerning it.

No one can be said to *know* that he is immortal. When Emerson and Theodore Parker, Addison and Samuel Taylor Coleridge affirmed that they *knew* they were immortal the most they could possibly have meant was that they had a very strong assurance, a very powerful intimation of immortality. Whether or not we are immortal is a question as to whether or not we shall continue to live after the state called Death; and since that cannot be decided or realized until it occurs, no one can say, in advance, that he *knows* it. Before we can claim knowledge concerning the hereafter we must be able to add to our reasoning *experience*, because into every act of human knowledge there enter both reason and experience, and of immortality no one can be said to have had experience. True, the spiritualists make that claim, but we shall have occasion to examine the grounds of their contention and see that they do not warf the claim.

No, we have but *faith*, we cannot *know*, yet

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let it not be forgotten that the faith which begins where knowledge ends is one of the permanent assets of the spiritual life. Think how our nature gains in depth and in height, when, in the absence of knowledge, we dare to live as though we actually knew; when, in the absence of demonstration, we dare to live as though justice and love were at the heart of things! Think how our nature gains in spiritual grandeur, when, in the absence of proof, we dare to live as though there were a veritable eternity of opportunity for development ahead of us! The truly great man is not he who has a ready answer for every vexing question and who lives with the complacency that is born of dogmatism. Nay, the truly great man is he who, in the absence of knowledge, rests back upon a rational faith and makes that faith the basis of further progress. The truly great man, I take it, is he who has a fund of moral heroism upon which he can draw whenever face to face with one or another of the conditions that are bound up with our agnosticism about the hereafter. To be minus that moral heroism and the spiritual heights of character to which it can lift us would be to lose what is of priceless worth.

This is the dominant note in the ethical mes-

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sage of Tennyson and the reason for the powerful appeal that the best of his poetry has made to the spiritual sufferers it was designed to help.

By the word “soul” we do not mean a diaphanous, transparent, attenuated form within our physical frame. That notion is indeed a superstition. Yet, as in the case of all other superstitions that live, it has an element of truth in it which keeps it alive. There is within us something nonmaterial, indissoluble, absolute; something by reason of which a sacredness attaches to each human being and the reality of which we ascertain by appeal to experience and, chiefly, the experience of pain, physical and moral pain. We may well shrink from the presumptuousness that would offer an explanation for the terrible sufferings to which hosts of human beings are subjected, but we should lose one of the finest spiritual values of our earthly experience did we fail to derive from pain evidence for the fact that we are spiritual beings in essence, that man *is* a soul and *has* a body. Such is the mighty conviction we are empowered to extract from pain. Given the world as it is and the existence of evil an unsolved problem, we are yet blessed in being able to turn pain to such sublime account, making it the re-

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vealer of a soul, a spiritual self within us that can say to pain: "You can have no power over me save as I supply the weapons."

It is, then, foundations for faith in the survival after death of the soul, the spiritual self, that we are to consider. And the reality of soul is made known through experience of physical and moral evil, of disease and remorse, more, perhaps, than through any other source.

Let us begin by examining a group of three minor foundations, still popular in certain quarters, but perhaps less entitled than any others to keep their hold on modern thought. These three minor bases are: (1) the *universality* of the belief in a hereafter; (2) the *instinctive desire* for a future life; (3) *intuition*, or immediate awareness of immortality.

Our attention will be directed, next, to the Christian basis with its four hundred million and more adherents. Then will follow consideration of a group of three foundations identified with modern occultism: spiritualism, psychical research, and theosophy, and finally (and engrossing our thought to a greater degree than any other), the foundation in moral experience and the practical relation it bears to the ethics of personal life.

FAITH IN A FUTURE LIFE

I

THREE MINOR FOUNDATIONS

We begin our series of studies in foundations for the faith in a future life by examining a group of three which, for convenience, we shall call minor foundations.

1. The alleged *universality* of the belief in a life beyond death. Man has always looked upon death as a way station rather than as a terminus. Yet his conception of the hereafter has not always been tantamount to personal immortality, i. e., conscious, active, joyous existence. Consequently we cannot support the faith in such a future on the basis of its universality. The truth is that this conception of the hereafter is not and never was *universal*. Read the Old Testament with reference to this subject and see how persistently the Hebrew held to the belief in Sheol, that "land of thick darkness, without any order and where the

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light is as darkness.”¹ Thither the souls of all the dead, good and bad alike, departed and there, in a colorless, shadowy, ghostlike, purposeless existence, they passed their days, a state that could not be characterized as “life,” so void was it of all that the heart of man desires. Certain passages in the Hebrew Bible there are, which *seem* to suggest personal immortality, but on closer study it is found that these refer only to the *present* life. With the single exception of a passage in the book of Daniel,² a very late book, written about 165 B.C., the prevailing view of the hereafter is negative and gloomy.³ And all the more remarkable is the absence in the Old Testament of any faith in conscious, joyous, active life beyond death, when we recall the contact of early Hebrew civilization with Egyptian life, dominated as the latter was by a highly developed, fully organized, realistic conception of a life to come.

True, the question may be raised whether, after all, there was any such contact of Hebrew with Egyptian civilization in pre-monarch-

¹ Job 10: 20.

² Daniel 12: 2.

³ See the quotations, confirming this statement, cited in Professor Toy's “Judaism and Christianity,” pp. 379 ff.

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ical Hebrew history. It may be that by reason of their residence in the outlying region of Goshen, where the Hebrews were permitted to pasture their flocks, they came into no lively intellectual contact with Egyptian religious thought and hence knew nothing of Egyptian eschatology. This would account not only for their retention of the old Semitic conception of Sheol but also for the absence of any reference in early Hebrew literature to the anti-thetical Egyptian belief in personal active survival of death. Certain it is that throughout the Old Testament we find the Hebrews wholly unaffected by Egyptian ideas of the hereafter. Not until their contact with Greek civilization in Egyptian Alexandria, as seen in the inter-biblical "Wisdom of Solomon," did the Jews respond to Egyptian influence in reshaping their doctrine of the hereafter. There, in that work of an Alexandrian Jew of the second century before our era, we find the first explicit statement of the belief in personal immortality.¹

Akin to the Hebrew Sheol was the Greek Hades, anticipation of which caused the Greeks to look on old age as only one degree

¹ "Wisdom of Solomon," 1:23; 2:4.

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less loathsome than death, while the Trojan Achilles expressed his preference for perpetual life on earth as a keeper of swine, to kingship over the realm of the dead, where the "shades" eke out a joyless, actionless, colorless existence. Among Greek philosophers prior to Plato the belief in personal survival after death was not deemed of sufficient consequence to be incorporated in their teaching. Socrates was even somewhat skeptical on the subject, treating it at times with refined irony but never once as an essential prerequisite for the moral life. Spinoza shared the ethical attitude of Socrates to the question and denied personal immortality while holding to the eternity of the human mind as "part of the infinite Substance," God.

— So Lotze, among modern philosophical thinkers, saw no reason for maintaining that human beings are necessarily immortal. Rather was it his view that they fulfil a certain temporary purpose in the Divine plan, and, when fulfilled, they are no longer required in the scheme of things and so cease to be.

Confucianism, with its eighty million adherents, furnishes a present-day instance of the non-universality of the belief in immortality. The founder of that religious system was a pro-

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nounced and confirmed agnostic on the subject and inculcated absolute indifference to it. — When besought by his disciples, as he so often was, to tell them something concerning the hereafter, he invariably turned their attention to the pressing moral needs of the living present. Small wonder that, for want of this belief in their own system, many Confucianists enlist the services of Taoist or Buddhist priests in the — hour of death and bereavement.

But even if the belief in a hereafter were universal it would not prove the belief to be true. The Ptolemaic astronomy was universal for centuries, but it was not true; for, in 1543, Copernicus published his "Constitution of the Universe," shattering the "crystal spheres" of Ptolemy and establishing the heliocentric as a substitute for the geocentric theory of the cosmos.

To rest the faith in a future life on the foundation of *universality* is, therefore, to base it both on an untruth and on an illogical inference.

2. The *instinctive desire for immortality*. It is said that because man has an instinctive desire for continuance of life after death, therefore like all his other instincts this one, too, will be provided for. Everywhere and always,

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we are told, the loving, yearning, hungry human heart has instinctively protested against an affirmative answer to the poet's question:

Is this the whole sad story of creation
Told by its toiling millions o'er and o'er?
One glimpse of day, then black annihilation,
A sunlit passage to a sunless shore?

Nay, not so, the heart instinctively cries, clinging with passionate embrace to its cherished faith while rebelling against such an outcome of creation's story. All our other instincts, it is fervently suggested, have their appropriate objects of satisfaction. We have an instinctive desire for food and food is supplied; for knowledge, and the means of learning are furnished; for social relationships, and society is provided. Must not then this instinctive desire for personal survival after death be likewise satisfied? Surely, continues the advocate of this view, surely this instinct of immortality which, "like a sea has ebbed and flowed in the human breast, with its countless waves of hope and fear, beating against the shores and rocks of time and fate," was not born of any book or creed and therefore it will continue to ebb and flow "between the mists of doubt and darkness as long as love kisses the lips of death."

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Expressed in these emotional terms, the argument seems as conclusive as it is appealing. But, stripped of this picturesque presentation, the lurking fallacy at once comes to light. Clearly enough, the instinctive desire for food does not guarantee that for all eternity we shall be provided with all we can eat. Neither does the instinctive desire for life carry with it the certainty of its indefinite prolongation. Quite apart, however, from so unwarrantable a basis for the belief in immortality is the fact that the desire for it is by no means universally acknowledged either as an *instinctive* or as an *acquired* desire. Thousands there are within and without Christendom, who confess to no consciousness of any such "*instinct*" in their psychical constitution. Other thousands have been so burdened and exasperated by the bitter, intolerable conditions of their earthly lot that, for them, annihilation is the ultimate desire. Still others there are, epicureans, sybarites, bon-vivants, people who have lived for the *lower* satisfactions of life, in whom no instinctive desire for survival of death is present but, on the contrary, only a readiness to give place to others, now that their own "*good time*" has come to an end.

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Not only is the desire for personal immortality non-universal, but human imagination has not always succeeded in making a future state sufficiently attractive to kindle desire for it. The primitive barbarian, for example, far from rejoicing in the prospect of a life to come shuddered as he thought of his approaching earthly end, reluctant as he was to exchange the familiar joys of the warm and sunny earth for the unknown climate and companionship of another world. If Professor Max Müller's conception of Nirvana be correct, then whole races of Buddhists anticipate ultimate annihilation as the goal of life and welcome it as the culmination of that long series of rebirths to which they believe they are destined. And without the pale of Buddhism are thousands who, for one reason or another, have no desire for immortality, preferring annihilation to any resumption of life after death, Achilles, as we have seen, contemplating post-mortem conditions, declared that he would prefer the most menial earthly occupation to kingship over the dead. General Grant, reflecting upon the Christian picture of Heaven, drawn from the New Testament Apocalypse, expressed his abhorrence of the prospect of perpetual psalm

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- singing and harp playing, a prospect to him as dreary and distressing as that of the ancient Greek anticipating Hades.

To base belief in a future life on an alleged *instinctive desire* for it is thus as unwarrantable as to found it on the alleged *universality* of the belief.

3. *Intuition*, the *transcendental foundation*. — Turn we now to the third in the group of minor foundations, one which has been peculiarly identified with the so-called transcendentalists, represented in England notably by Addison, Coleridge, Max Müller; in the United States by Theodore Parker, Alcott, Emerson and not without its representatives to-day. Man, they say, cannot live by intellect alone, intuition must be recognized. Man's spirit is a greater thing than his intellect. Prove, if you will, that his intuition has no just title to be consulted; *e pur si muove*, witness the vogue of Bergson, Eucken and Maeterlinck. According to the intuitionists, or transcendentalists, man is in possession of a "primary faculty" transcending reason and experience, making him *immediately cognizant* of spiritual realities; hence their name. God, immortality, duty, according to transcendentalism, are "facts of consciousness," part

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and parcel of the human mind, truths wrought into the very structure of the human soul and wholly independent of experience, testimony or demonstration. Knowledge of God's existence and of immortality is "an intuition of reason, depending primarily on no argument whatever; not on reasoning, but on Reason. It comes spontaneously. The belief always precedes the proof, intuition giving the thing to be reasoned about."¹ Corresponding to this view of Parker we have the statement of Max Müller: "There is a faculty in man coördinate with sense and reason, the faculty of perceiving the infinite; *Vernunft* as contrasted with *Verstand* (reason) and *Sinne* (sense). It is the faculty of faith, restricted to those objects which cannot be supplied by the evidence of the senses or by the evidence of reason, a power independent of sense and reason, while alone able to overcome both reason and sense."² With the aid of this "third faculty" transcendentalism rescued the cardinal doctrines of religion, God, and immortality, from death. The philosophy of sensation, heralded by Locke, with this motto,

¹ Parker: "Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion," pp. 21, 22.

² Müller: "Science of Religion," pp. 13-15.

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“*Nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu,*” furnished no warrant for the belief in the soul’s survival of death, because immortality is not demonstrable to the senses. But by taking the doctrine out from the field of sense-experience and making it an integral element in the constitution of the mind itself, transcendentalism rescued it from its dangerous position and placed it where it seemed permanently safe. Arguments to prove the reality of immortality were now no more in order than were arguments to prove the reality of beauty or the worth of love. With Addison, intuitionists have

. . . *felt* their immortality o’ersweep
All time, all change, all fears
And peal like the eternal thunders of the deep
Into their ears this truth—
Man thou shalt never die.

Redolent as are the writings of Emerson with — faith in a future life, we search in vain for *argument* in support of it. Not a single paper in the whole series of his “*Dial*” was devoted to debate of the subject. It was too deep, too elemental to be discussed. It was assumed, it was “*known*”—beyond cavil or question. And whereas the objections of materialism did not in the least disturb the transcendentalists,

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the traditional arguments of orthodox Christians, based on Church authority, or on scriptural revelation, were repudiated as stumbling blocks in the way of spiritual faith because they diverted attention from the witness of *the soul*, the testimony of the "*inner light*." Holding that the "intuition of reason" is synonymous with "revelation from God," that the function of this special "third faculty" is to *receive* the "revelation," the intuitionist simply elevated the ideas of God, immortality, and duty above the reach of legitimate doubt and examination. For him they were too sacred to be tested or scrutinized by the discursive reason or "understanding"; rather were they to be accepted by it unreservedly and submissively. To demand credentials for the validity of these great ideas, to wish to subject them to the test by which science sifts truth from error, is, in the estimation of the transcendentalist, the arch impiety and proof of a perverted religious nature. Let the claims of the Pope, the Bible, the Church, the Christ, be freely investigated; but not these *ultimate* religious ideas. To exercise independent, unfettered thought upon *them* is to be guilty of "irreligion" of "ethico-religious unsoundness." Small wonder, then, that intui-

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tion has been called the “last ditch” of dogmatism. For *papal and biblical* infallibilities it substitutes a *transcendental* infallibility. ’Tis a silken cord indeed, as against the earlier chains, yet it restricts freedom of thought and suppresses the right of the intellect to demand a reason for the faith it holds. The questioning thought of the twentieth century is not to be quieted by the simple “I feel” or “I know” of intuition. The one subject on which everybody is *obliged* to be agnostic is immortality—no one can say, *I know I am immortal*. The most one can possibly mean who makes this assertion is that he has a strong assurance, a powerful intimation. Assuredly is it a misuse of language for a man to say he “knows” today a possible future fact. The question whether or not he is immortal is a question of the continuance of his life after the fact called death. And since this is a fact that can be known only when it comes, it is impossible for him to be conscious of it now. The difficulty attending intuition as a foundation on which to rest one’s faith in a future life lies in the impossibility of verifying its “revelations.” Were all people aware of the existence within them of such a transcendent faculty, a *universal* source of

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appeal would be at hand; but in the absence of anything even approaching universal acknowledgment of such a "primary instrument of knowledge," the evidential value of intuition is necessarily limited to those persons who consider themselves so endowed. It can never take rank as a *universal* criterion of truth and nothing short of *that* can permanently satisfy the seeker after truth. Just as Romanism exalted the principle of universal reason to sole sovereignty, settling all questions of creed and conduct by appeal to the Pope as representative of the universal reason of the faithful, so intuitionism exalts the principle of private judgment, recognizing no external authority in faith and morals as superior to intuition. Yet only as both principles are reconciled in the method of science, which accords to every individual the right of private judgment, yet makes its appeal to enlightened public opinion, the aggregated wisdom of the whole, the "Consensus of the Competent" (as the lamented Francis E. Abbot described it), can we turn our backs on infallibilities and make the nearest possible approach to absolute truth permitted to man. For science solves vexed questions neither absolutely, nor infallibly, but approximately.

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She decides on the facts so far as known and reserves the right to reconsider her decisions in the light of fresh facts, or fresh knowledge of old facts. While, therefore, intuition may serve as an adequate foundation for the faith in a future life, in the estimation of individuals who believe they have that "faculty" it can never transcend this individualistic limitation and appeal to the world at large. When questioned as to whether the words God, immortality, duty, are words of truth, the intuitionist resorts to the bare affirmation of "a faith that can give no reason for itself" asserting on the strength of his private intuition, "I know." But instantly there comes back the question, "*How do you know?*" If to that question there be still nothing but a reaffirmation of the words "I know," then, in spite of his undoubting certitude, the intelligence of the age will record its inevitable verdict, "He does *not* know; he fancies, he dreams." And its verdict will be just.¹ As a dogma, whether papal, biblical or intuitional, the faith in a future life must die. As a sublime hypothesis it must submit to the test

¹ Even Emerson cannot escape that verdict: "I delight," he says, "in telling what I think, but if you ask me, how I dare say so, or why it is so, I am the most helpless of men."

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of educated intelligence. Modern disciplined thought asserts its indefeasible right to sit in judgment on this mighty guess and its demand must be granted. It knows nothing of finalities or authorities that dare not be doubted. It plainly accepts all the risks of a fallibility that cannot be escaped but which can be reduced to a minimum by the consentaneous judgment of free and trained minds. In short, the intellectual irresponsibility of intuition must be checked if society is to be saved from the peril to which individualism exposes it.

II

THE CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION

For the Christian millions faith in a future life is founded on the New Testament record of the most stupendous of all miracles. It is that the veritable body of Jesus rose from the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea and having thus risen appeared to disciples, talked with them, gave them directions and then ascended to heaven in the selfsame body he had worn throughout the thirty years of his earthly life.

It is this miracle and the inference of personal immortality which believing Christians draw from it that the Easter festival annually commemorates. The alleged physical resurrection of Jesus—this is the Christian foundation for the faith in a future life. But the difficulty here is that what Christians offer as proof of immortality is itself in need of being proved. Not only does the evidence fail to establish the occurrence of such a miracle but a physical resurrection *from the grave* is not at all what was

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believed and taught by Paul and the apostles.

Recall with me briefly what the New Testament tells us on the subject.

Our earliest witness is the Apostle Paul. He expressly states that he never saw Jesus in the flesh (I Cor. 15:8). The one and only way in which Jesus was seen by him was in a “vision” on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus (Acts 9: 3-19 *et passim*). Moreover he confesses he was given to seeing visions, to having strange psychic experiences (II Cor. 12:1-4). From this we infer that the successive appearances of Jesus, related by the Apostle in his first letter to the Corinthians, were regarded by him as of the same vision type as his own on the journey to Damascus. In none of his letters does Paul testify to a resurrection of Jesus from *the grave*. What he does testify to is a resurrection from *the dead*—a distinction to which we shall shortly return. Paul, moreover, makes no mention of the reports of women at the tomb, nor of any appearances there or on the road to Emmaus, nor of Jesus, at a post-mortem appearance, eating fish in the company of disciples. Paul knew nothing of an empty tomb nor of visits that were made to it. Yet he was Peter’s guest for a fortnight at Jerusalem (Gal.

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1:18). How, then, could Peter have failed to make mention of these details if he knew them? Or how could Paul have failed to make use of them when confuting the skeptical Corinthians had he ever heard of these particulars? Nay more, any report of an empty tomb would have completely set at naught the argument adduced in the fifteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians. Hence we are forced to the conclusion that all these details found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and written much later than Paul's letter, originated *after* the visit to Peter, who himself knew nothing of them.

Turning next to what is known as the "Triple Tradition," the story of Jesus' life in which all three of the Synoptic Gospels agree, we observe that the narrative of a physical resurrection is no part of that source of information. True, the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke contain such a story, but it is missing in Mark's gospel. For the ending of that gospel as we have it in our New Testament is not the *original* ending. In the margin of the Revised Version we are expressly told that these concluding verses of the Gospel (9-20) "are omitted in the two oldest Greek Manuscripts"

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and that "other authorities have a different ending to the Gospel." When inspecting the earliest extant New Testament manuscript in the imperial library at St. Petersburg, I was particularly impressed by the gap covering the space which the twelve verses of the present ending of the Gospel occupy and also by the abruptness of the ending of the Gospel, in the middle of a sentence and with the word "because." The probability is that the original ending of the gospel was unorthodox, recounting a "Docetic" or *phantasmal* appearance of Jesus after his death and for this reason was suppressed. Finding too in Matthew's story the phrase "but some doubted," we infer that the reason for skepticism was the *nature* of the appearance. When we compare with one another the accounts of a physical resurrection as given in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, we observe that they differ in eight particulars and all relating to what happened at the tomb.

Comparing the reports of all three Gospels (Mark, Matthew and Luke) we note that the points of difference now increase from eight to twelve.

Add the account given in the Fourth Gospel to the resurrection narratives already exam-

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ined, and we find the points of difference increase from twelve to twenty-one.¹

So far then as the testimony of the records is concerned—and remembering that we know not who wrote the Gospels—the evidence amounts only to this: somebody said that somebody saw Jesus, somewhere, somehow, after he had been entombed. In no irreverent or flip-pant spirit is the evidence thus summed up. It seems to express succinctly and with precision — what the records compel us to conclude.

But what we have to note now is that not only do the records furnish no valid evidence for belief in a physical resurrection of Jesus, but also it is not what Paul and the apostles believed and taught. They believed and taught a resurrection *from the dead*, not a resurrection *from the grave*. Let me explain. In Old Testament times the Hebrews believed that at death all souls, good and bad alike, departed to Sheol, the underworld, that “land of thick darkness” as Job described it, “where the light is as darkness.” There the dead passed their days in a gloomy, shadowy, ghostlike colorless existence. But during the interbiblical period,

¹ For a detailed statement, see the Author’s “Life of Jesus in the Light of the Higher Criticism,” pp. 221 ff.

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i. e., between the latest book of the Old Testament and the earliest of the New Testament, the belief gradually grew up in a division of Sheol into two sections, the one Gehenna, reserved for the wicked, and the other Paradise tenanted by the good; the two sections within visible and speaking distance of each other. This belief passed over into the New Testament and appears in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, recorded by Luke. Dives, agonizing in Gehenna, looks across the gulf separating it from Paradise and there sees poor Lazarus leaning on the bosom of Abraham. Dives calls to the patriarch bidding him ask Lazarus to dip his finger in water and bring relief to the burning tongue of Dives. Still another instance of the presence of this belief in the Gospels is furnished by the remark of Jesus to the penitent thief upon the cross: "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," meaning that portion of Sheol marked off for the repentant and the righteous; not the celestial Heaven, synonymous only at a later day with Paradise. In Jesus' time it was believed that Heaven was the home of only God, the angels, Enoch and Elijah. All other beings that had died were thought of as in Sheol-Gehenna, or in Sheol-Paradise.

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But even in this latter section, life was anything but desirable—joyless, actionless, purposeless, hopeless, cut off from all communion with God and all terrestrial relations and interests. Hence, there grew up the further belief that they who had been accounted worthy to occupy the Paradise portion of Sheol would somehow escape from this underworld and be resurrected from Sheol, when the great Messianic era would dawn. In the interbiblical book of "Enoch" we see this belief in an advanced stage of crystallization. And when we turn to the famous fifteenth chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians we see the belief in its fully developed form. Here the Apostle declares to the skeptical Corinthians that Jesus has already risen from *the dead* and is indeed "the first-fruits of them that slept" i. e., the first to have come up from Sheol (where life resembled a sleep rather than a waking state), "and has ascended into heaven whence he will shortly descend at the sound of the trump" and all the faithful in Sheol will ascend, wearing "celestial bodies," incorruptible, immortal. In the first letter to the Thessalonians still fuller details are given. There we read that when the risen Christ descends with a shout, at the sound of

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the trump, to establish the heavenly kingdom on earth they in Sheol, who believe he is the Messiah, will first be resurrected and then they who are still living and thus believe shall be "caught up in the clouds" together with them that had risen from Sheol, "to meet the Lord in the air" and all together be "ever with the Lord."¹ Small wonder that the first Christians walked the streets of Jerusalem with their faces turned upward, eager to catch the very first glimpse of the descending Christ (Acts 1: 2). Thus the word "resurrection" as used by Paul and his fellow-converts signified only resurrection from the dead, from Sheol, never a physical resurrection from the grave. Jesus himself used the word with the selfsame signification current in the first century in Palestine. In his discussion with the Sadducees, recorded in the twelfth chapter of Mark, he uses the expression "when they shall rise from the dead."

In the light of this prevailing conception of the resurrection of the soul from Sheol as against the resurrection of the body from the grave, how unnatural and absurd it would have been for the disciples to go to the tomb to see if

¹ I Thess. 4.

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Jesus' body were still there or not! They had no interest in his body; what concerned them was his soul and its residence in Sheol. Surely one as spiritually great as he *must* have escaped from Paradise, ascended to Heaven and will soon return to earth to establish the Kingdom of which he preached. Had not Enoch and Elijah been translated to Heaven? How much more worthy he who transcended the patriarch and the prophet! How *could* so exalted and exalting a personality be permitted to remain in Sheol! He *must* have risen. No other alternative is any longer to be entertained. In some such wise the disciples reflected—as we are led to infer from the New Testament record. How natural and inevitable such reflection must have been! On that fateful Thursday evening they had been terrorstricken by the arrest of their master. In terror they fled from Gethsemane and found their way back to Galilee (Acts 1:2; compare Mk. 14:5). Here they took breath and came to themselves. For here they had walked and talked with Jesus, day after day, for a year or more. Here every footpath, valley, lakeshore, hilltop was sanctified by the memory of his presence and his preaching. Here, then, the conviction came

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to the disciples that he whom they had known and loved and revered *could not remain in Sheol* but must have risen, ascended to Heaven, soon to fulfill the heavenly Father's commission and usher in the Kingdom of God on earth. But for the rise of this conviction in the minds and hearts of the disciples they would never have rallied at Jerusalem as we read they did. But for that mighty belief of theirs the birth of Christianity would have been indefinitely postponed. Given this intense conviction and it needed only a hint, a rumor that someone had seen Jesus, to start the legend of a physical resurrection. And, once started, it would quickly and spontaneously take on increasing marvelous detail—as in the retelling of many other incidents which the Gospels record¹—especially in that age when the masses were on tiptoe of excitement in anticipation of the speedy advent of the Messiah. Hence the story of a physical resurrection from the grave followed upon the conviction of the disciples that their Master *could not remain in Sheol* but had experienced a resurrection from the dead. They had been dull of understanding

¹ For illustration, see the Author's "Life of Jesus," pp 85, 212.

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but now that this conviction had come upon them they comprehended their mission to mankind. They had slept in Gethsemane, now they were awake to the pressing need of the hour. They had fled from their Master's cross, now they were ready to take up their own cross. They had been sheep, timidly following the shepherd, now they were themselves shepherds, eager to give their life for the sheep. Thus, for the belief in a physical resurrection of Jesus, we substitute the belief that his body perished, returned to dust, mingled with the streams, nourished the grasses and the flowers, while what he stood for rose again through the resurrection of faith, courage, loyalty, consecration, in the hearts of his despondent and despairing disciples. Christianity, therefore, arose not in a fiction, nor in a delusion, much less in an imposture. It arose, not from a material fact, but from a great spiritual fact which promptly brought other spiritual facts in its train. First, there was the thought of the personality and influence of Jesus as recalled by the disciples when they were once more in Galilee. That thought gave rise to the conviction that their master could not be in Paradise-Sheol with all the rest of the noble dead, but that he,

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above all others, must have escaped and ascended to heaven soon to return to earth and reign over the Messianic Kingdom. That conviction transformed the disciples from despairing cowards into apostolic heroes, heralding their conviction that Jesus was now in heaven and would soon come back to earth. From the heralding of that belief sprang the rumor that Jesus had been seen, and from the rumor was eventually evolved the familiar stories of a physical resurrection. These, I incline to believe, were the five successive steps in the process that led to the belief in a physical resurrection of Jesus.

We are thus brought back to my initial remark that what is offered as proof of immortality is itself in need of being proved. The evidence simply does not support the belief in a physical resurrection of Jesus and what is more this does not represent the conception entertained by Paul and the Apostles who gave the word "resurrection" only the same connotation that Jesus applied to it, viz., the soul's rising from Sheol, tersely expressed in the phrase "resurrection from the dead."

But now, even were it granted that Jesus did rise physically from the grave, it would not

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Follow that all believing Christians are immortal. For, according to their view, it was the "Son of God" that thus rose and we are not warranted in inferring the immortality of ordinary beings from the experience of one who was *supernatural*. Jesus, in the estimation of all Christians, differed from all other persons in *kind* as well as in degree. It would therefore be illogical to infer from the resurrection of so unique a personality the immortality of lesser souls albeit they believe in his uniqueness.

Nay more, not even were Jesus *a man*, differing from all other souls only in degree, a view that has the support of the Synoptic Gospels, would his resurrection prove the immortality of his followers. All that could be logically, consistently inferred therefrom would be that *not all* men are eternally subject to death; i. e., what occurred in the case of one man *might possibly* occur in the case of others. Consequently whether we take the orthodox or the heterodox view of Jesus' personality, the alleged miracle of his resurrection furnishes no adequate foundation for the faith in a future life. Certain, at any rate, it is, that future generations will not attach the evidential value to

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the New Testament story that has bee
corded it in the past. Equally certain it
seem that apart from some sort of evid
support for the belief in immortality it i
likely to take on any new or greater deg
importance for the people of coming cent

III

THE THESIS OF MATERIALISM

Before entering upon discussion of the foundations for faith in a future life which modern occultism presents, it may be well if at this point we pause to consider a negative aspect of our subject, one which has been given forceful expression by a class of scientific thinkers commonly known as materialists. Their contention is that the faith in a future life must be discredited because there are "established conclusions of science" with which that faith fails to harmonize. Very widely does this opinion prevail, extending far beyond the circle of avowed materialists. Science, it is said, has pushed her investigations so far that the last vestige of a reasonable basis for the doctrine of personal immortality has disappeared.

It behooves us therefore, as free truth-seekers, to examine the thesis of materialism and determine whether its claim can be substantiated or whether, perchance, its destructive

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shaft, like the boomerang, has recoiled upon the projector, and with fatal effect.

In the estimation of materialists all phenomena whatsoever, be they in outward nature, or in human consciousness, are explicable by the ultimate properties of matter. It is maintained, moreover, that these properties are eternal and underived; existing, therefore, as ultimate facts which explain everything while remaining themselves unexplained. According to this view not only is consciousness the product of a peculiar organization of matter but it cannot survive the disorganization of the material body with which it is associated. In other words, every living person is an organized whole and consciousness is something which pertains to this organized whole, as music belongs to the harp that is entire; but when the harp is broken it is silent; so when the organized whole of personality falls to pieces consciousness ceases forever. Tyndall, in his famous Belfast address, described matter as "that mysterious thing by which all phenomena have been accomplished from the evaporation of a drop of water to the conscious life of man," a statement of which it has been truly said, "it is not a definition but an oracle." To say that

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¶ the force inherent in matter is matter, is to reason in a circle rather than toward a goal. Professor Hering, of Vienna, included *memory* among the inherent properties of matter and referred to it as "the reproduction of parental forms," a position which clearly "begs the question" because memory is a purely *intellectual* function and, as such, cannot be classed among *physical* properties at all.

Martineau in his memorable address on "Substitutes for God" makes short work of the unwarranted liberties that materialists have taken in their effort to explain consciousness in terms of matter. The materialist asks for as many kinds of atoms as there are chemical elements, seventy-two in all. But how, even with these, can *consciousness* be educed? How can the concurrence of any number of any kind of atoms ever *explain* consciousness? And when the materialist replies by positing "polarity and gravitation" among the eternal properties of matter and "organic and inorganic molecules" as constituting "the one and only substance," it becomes clear that each new emergency is provided for by a new ascription to matter of some quality or property not in requisition before. Matter "began as a beggar

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and lo, it turns up as a prince," loaded with more and more properties to meet the ever heavier tax that is put upon it. Like a bank account, the original deposit of matter is repeatedly drawn on to meet each new demand and every claim seems to have been honorably met, whereas the account was overdrawn at the start when, in order to explain consciousness, more was required than was originally deposited; thus forcing the insolvent theory into the hands of a receiver.

Clifford's "mind-stuff," Haeckel's atoms with "mind-sides," Leibnitz' "ideated monads," what are these but ascriptions to matter of foreign elements in order to make it explain the phenomena of consciousness. As the miner "salts" his claim with gold dust to enhance its value for the unsuspecting purchaser, so the materialist "salts" matter with mental or spiritual qualities, not one of which can be taken out except as it was first put in. Not inaptly did Francis E. Abbot compare the thesis of materialism, that matter is the only substance and that all natural forces are but the qualities or properties of matter, to the polytheism of the ancient Greeks and to the former's decided disadvantage. For him materialism was "a degenera-

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tion of mythological religion," a neo-polytheism in which the Hellenic deities have become metaphysical entities or abstractions—the properties of matter being independent, unintelligent powers whose blind, haphazard conjunctions or collisions have resulted in the world of Nature and of Man.

When Tyndall made his famous declarations that "the passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable"; that "while a definite thought and a definite molecular action in the brain occur simultaneously, we do not possess the intellectual organ which would enable us to pass, by a process of reasoning, from the one to the other"; that "the chasm between these physical processes and the facts of consciousness remains intellectually impassable," the great physicist disqualified materialism to sit as a juror in the case of conscious survival of death. Were brain and thought related to each other as *cause and effect*, materialism would hold the field and its claim to have disposed of immortality would be substantiated.

From physics we learn that heat, light and electricity are interconvertible because all are modes of motion. Motion is their common fac-

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tor. But between moving particles of gray matter in the brain and thought there is no such relation; on the contrary, there is a chasm that has never yet been bridged. If thought is to be assigned a cause it must be of the same *kind* as the effect, and no such adequate cause has been discerned. How physical brain-processes are connected with the facts of consciousness still remains a mystery. Browning, in "Abt Vogler," furnishes a suggestive parallel here. Could we explain how, from the physical musical notes, psychical emotional states are awakened, we would have solved the riddle of the universe. Hence his injunction to the reader reverently to bow before this mystery of music, as inexplicable indeed as the whence of thought, associated with physical processes in the brain.

Consider it well: each tone of our scale in itself is naught;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said:
Give it to *me* to use! I mix it with two in my thought:
And, there! Ye have heard and seen: Consider and bow the head!

No, science has *not* disproved immortality and till it does no one need apologize for re-

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taining his faith. All that science has proved is that material processes *accompany* mental states, not that the latter are *caused* by the former. Science has proved that the molecular motion of the gray matter in the brain is *concomitant* with thought, not that it is the *cause* of thought. Science has demonstrated that the eye is the organ of sight, but not the seer; the ear the organ of hearing but not the hearer; the brain the organ of thought but not the thinker. In the movements, groupings, electrical discharges of brain molecules we have the *function* of the brain, i. e., the actions it is fitted to perform, just as the chemical resolution of food is the function of the stomach; or the conducting of stimulus, the function of the nerves. And since the brain finds its function in a class of actions separated by an "intellectually impassable chasm" from consciousness and will, how can we rationally or consistently attribute these also to the brain as part of its function? The most we can legitimately say of consciousness and will is that they coexist with their physical concomitants while incapable of being brought into intelligible relation with them. Consequently we are wholly without warrant for affirming, as the materialists do, that dis-

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connection of brain and thought is impossible. By as much as the union of physical and psychical states is a mystery, so their separation can scarcely be considered as beyond the pale of possibility. In other words, in the physics of the brain there is nothing that forecloses the question of a future life. In his widely read Harvard lecture on "Immortality" Professor William James declared the materialist's objection to belief in immortality as shallow and worthless. It does not follow that the "I" which now uses the brain as its organ of thought will cease to exist when that instrument returns to dust. "Thought is not a function of the brain as steam is of the tea-kettle, but only as the color-fan of the spectrum is of the refracting prism." Our brains are the prisms, as it were, through which thought is transmitted. In other words, according to Professor James, the brain has a "*transmissive*" as against a "*productive*" function.

The brain then is only a machine for making our thoughts and emotions apparent to others. At death the machine breaks, but for all that science knows, the operator may still possess what he had to communicate. The materialist asks, what reason is there to expect that after

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the dissolution of brain matter, consciousness will remain, any more than that the wetness of water will remain after it has been resolved into hydrogen and oxygen? Assuredly, so far as the limits of our experience and knowledge are concerned, we have no warrant at all for such an expectation. But what does this argument amount to so far as disproving immortality goes? Absolutely nothing. What right have we to assume that because we know thought only in association with brain, there can be no thought without brain? To say that because the universe has no brain of which we know anything, therefore there is no thought in the universe, would be obviously absurd. On a par with this falsely reasoned dependence of thought upon brain stands the celebrated materialistic epigram of Büchner: "The brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile"—a wholly undemonstrated proposition and based on the fallacious identifying of two distinct and unbridged sets of phenomena. As Clifford so forcefully expressed it, "the literal existence of thought in the brain is destitute of all experimental support." No one can *see* a thought, a sensation. Refine and attenuate the atoms of gray matter in the brain as much as you please,

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your thought still remains utterly unlike the whitest, thinnest cerebral tissue. The most delicate fibers of gray matter woven in the loom of science or of the imagination cannot be spun into an emotion. You can resolve a tear into oxygen, hydrogen, chlorin and sodium, but the mystery of grief remains as unexplained as ever. The difference between the tone of the marriage bell which begins happiness and that of the funeral toll which ends it cannot be stated in terms of "heat-waves" or the "concurrence of brain-atoms."

Twenty-five years ago Haeckel broached what to many seemed the final scientific objection to belief in personal survival of death. His points were briefly these: All phenomena of the mind are inseparable from and products of physiological conditions. If, therefore, the cerebral centers of the brain are removed by surgery, or ruined by disease, all the corresponding mental activities will cease. When, at death, the cells which are the seat of thought and feeling cease their physiological activities, then the atoms of the brain separate and drop down into the lower unconscious states and all mental life terminates. The self is only a collective name
"aggregation of thought-producing atoms

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with *mind-sides* which therefore have no more reality or permanence than the spectrum colors of the summer rainbow.

But since these startling statements were published a more startling discovery was made, in the light of which Haeckel's contention is robbed of all its cogency. This discovery is known as the "discontinuity of matter" and quite does away with Haeckel's cocksureness that death ends all. This discovery supplements that of the indestructibility of matter and of force, according to which no electrical volt, no chemical force, ever drops out of existence. Their forms may change but the sum total of energy remains the same. To this we now add the fact of interatomic spaces in the brain, gaps between the atoms to which "mind-sides" have been attributed and whose supposed "aggregation" both "produced and maintained thought." No, these atoms do not stand in close touch; they have no actual contacts; nay, more, so preponderant are the interatomic spaces that out of the cubic contents of a human brain only a few hundredths consist of material particles. How then shall these *separated* atoms unite thought with thought, link premise and conclusion, combine sensations

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of sight and touch? For all such mental processes we need something more unitary and continuous than the "aggregation of the mind-sides" of isolated atoms. Modern physics has acquainted us with the fact that in our bodies is something more subtle than matter, something that occupies more space than all its corporeal particles, something which forms a continuous substance, imponderable, imperceptible; something "analogous to the luminiferous ether" or other substance which transmits solar energies; a "mentiferous ether" as an Oxford professor has called it, an "intermediary between cells and thought," the "immaterial substratum of the self."

Thus, while science enlarges the boundaries of our knowledge she at the same time widens the boundaries of our ignorance, interpreting an ever larger area of the unknown while revealing new depths to be explored.

In the light, then, of what science has disproved as well as discovered, the faith in a future life cannot be set down as irrational or unwarrantable. Since science has proved that mental processes are only accompanied by, not produced by, material processes, that an impassable gulf separates thought from the phys-

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ics of the brain, that the problem of the connection of soul with body is as insoluble in its modern form as it was in prescientific ages—to quote Tyndall's phrase—no one need be ashamed of his faith. Until science can prove that thought is impossible *apart from* brain-physics, faith remains in possession of the ground. All we know is that brain and thought go together in our experience, without being able to say that the latter is caused by the former. Borrowing an illustration from Professor Adler, we may liken their relation to two citizens, walking arm in arm into a town and through the town but parting company when they pass the city limits. So brain and thought come arm in arm, as it were, into the town of life but there is no known reason why they may not separate when they pass out of sight of the citizens because their relation is *not* one of cause and effect but only of concomitance or simultaneity. And while these facts prove that the faith in a future life is devoid of *objective* foundation, they do *not* disprove the faith. Nay more, it is inconceivable that any future advance in physical discovery can impugn it.

Just here let me interject the statement that with materialists, as men, one can have no

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quarrel. I respect each according to his individual character, for one may respect a thinker while repudiating his thought even as one may love a sinner while hating his sin. Many a materialist have I met, incorruptible, unselfish, humanitarian; but materialism, in my judgment, is neither a science nor a philosophy but a reactionary theory following upon an extravagant transcendentalism. No longer is it left to theology to decry materialism. Science herself has sounded its death knell. Today it is as difficult to find a genuinely scientific champion of its thesis as it was fifty years ago to find an opponent.

EVOLUTION

It remains to say a word concerning evolution which is often strangely construed as synonymous with materialism and, hence, destructive of the faith in a future life. But the truth is there is no necessary connection between the two. Not only is evolution not identical with materialism but it has not added an iota to the reasonableness of it. Evolution is an established law of Nature, materialism is a crude and unwarranted inference from that law, unwarranted because evolution is not self-explained

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regardless of some originating or informing power. So far as the question of immortality stands related to the law of evolution we have to note that the accumulated evidence in support of evolution neither disproves immortality nor establishes it as a legitimate inference therefrom. All that can be properly inferred from Nature's evolutionary process is a *reasoned probability* that the outcome, whatever it be, will justify the process. As a reasoned probability, Leverrier, in 1845, announced the existence of an unknown planet. In the following year "Neptune" was seen and precisely where the astronomer had predicted its appearance. As a reasoned probability, Professor Ramsay affirmed the existence of a gas never yet discovered by any of the senses, and lo! "neon" appeared. Now just as the scientific world believed in the reality of both the planet and the gas before their discovery, so we may believe as a reasoned probability that the outcome of the evolutionary process will be worth all it cost.

Modern astronomers tell us that our earth is dying and doomed to become "a frozen waterless waste" and the total earthly succession of living creatures come to an end. Has it, then,

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been developed, apparently, at almost infinite waste of effort, only to be abolished again before it has attained to completeness, or does it shelter some indestructible element that shall survive the final decay of physical phenomena? Unless something worth while shall survive this ultimate disaster evolution must be set down as a senseless fiasco and farce. If that process, in the course of which there appeared a Homer, a Plato, a Dante, a Shakespeare, a Goethe, a Darwin, is to end in a harvest of corpses, leaving no permanent good behind, then we must liken the process to the act of a crazy sculptor who, after lifelong toil upon a magnificent masterpiece, broke it into fragments. Or we might compare the process to a drama with a prologue and a series of absorbingly interesting acts, in the last of which the lights go out and the whole thing vanishes like a dream. No *man* would create such a world; no *man* would be guilty of *evolving* such a system only to see it end in failure and chaos, the most hideous of mockeries. That the ultimate issue of the process will justify it is a *reasoned probability*. Beyond this we are not warranted in carrying our thought. Yet preachers, poets and even scientists have gone further, holding that im-

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mortality is a "logical necessity," given the fact of evolution.

The lamented geologist, Le Conte, could think of no possible alternative but man's immortality as the consummation of Nature's history. Without *that* "the beautiful cosmos would be precisely as if it had never been, an idle dream, an idiot-tale signifying nothing."¹

Tennyson, whose "In Memoriam" was published nine years before Darwin's "Origin of Species," held the selfsame view. Contemplating the age-long process of evolution the poet exclaimed:

—And he, shall he,
Man, her last work, who seemed so fair,
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer . . .

Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just,—
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or seal'd within the iron hills?

No more! A monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music match'd with him.

¹ Le Conte: "Evolution in Relation to Religious Thought," p. 329.

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Quite recently, a prominent preacher of this city expressed himself in still stronger terms. The facts of human existence "demonstrate," "establish," according to him, the reality of immortality. In a recent contribution to the *Christian Register*, he said:

"If Immortality is nothing but a hope, a probability, a dream, then is the vast and splendid structure of modern science, which no sane man thinks of questioning, nothing but a hope, a probability, a dream. The Scientist, although he does not know in actual experience, has a perfect right to accept as proved the reality of 'ether.' And in exactly the same way, the theologian, although he does not know in actual conscious experience, has a perfect right to accept as proved the reality of the conception of Immortality."

But the existence of an ocean of ether enveloping the molecules of material bodies has been doubted or denied by eminent physicists,¹ for the conception involves properties and relations of the ether hard to harmonize with the particulars of our knowledge concerning matter. Even the "undulatory" theory of light is being questioned afresh and partial reversion

¹ Fiske: "The Unseen World," p. 20.

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to the Newtonian "corpuscular" theory is, in some quarters, in vogue. And how can we justify the use of the words "established," "demonstrated," "proved," in connection with a possible *future* fact? Surely we see in these quoted sentences the same sort of overstatement that Carlyle made when he said of music that it "reveals the infinite." What music really does is to waken the emotions associated with the idea of the Divine. So the tracing of the evolutionary process and the contemplation of "the great facts of existence" awaken in us a powerful suggestion, a strong intimation of personal survival of death. But these facts cannot, without unwarranted abuse of the dictionary, be said to "establish" or "demonstrate" that survival.

Moreover, we can *conceive* of the cosmic process leading to something other than individual immortality, though we cannot *picture* it; some "far off, divine event" in nowise anthropomorphic, making it of no consequence that we should individually endure.

The most that can be legitimately claimed for the supreme discovery of the nineteenth century, the law of evolution, is that it points to something other than nothingness as the final

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outcome of the age-long cosmic process. The question of fact, Does the real, personal I survive the event of death as still real personal I? can be answered only by *experience* of that fact and experience of it is totally lacking. This is what John Fiske meant when he declared that his faith in the soul's immortality must be distinguished from his acceptance of the demonstrable truths of science, thus holding with Kant that immortality is unsupported by demonstrative evidence or proof beyond the possibility of denial. The philosopher accepted it as a postulate of the "practical reason," the highest good being, in his judgment, possible only on the hypothesis of the soul's immortality. Disembodied personality is certainly not inconceivable and we cannot say it is impossible. But never has inconceivability been esteemed a criterion of truth, a basis on which to establish an hypothesis so that it warrants the affirmation of knowledge on the question at issue.

Knowledge is the "identity in difference" of reason and experience and, however absolute the decree registered by reason in favor of immortality, we cannot actually *know* it till we have experienced it.

IV

THE ETHICAL ATTITUDE TOWARD MODERN OCCULTISM—SPIRITUALISM, PSYCHICAL RESEARCH, THEOSOPHY

As defined in the Century Dictionary the word “occultism” means that which is hidden, not apparent on mere inspection, under cover, obscure. Accepted in this, its simple, original meaning, the term “occultism” may be conveniently used to describe the group of three movements which we are to consider in their bearing upon the question of immortality.

Occultism includes spiritualism, in so far as its central doctrine of “spirit-intercourse” is “not apparent on mere inspection” but needs clarification and verification. For the same reason, psychical research, dealing with the subliminal self, telepathy and other obscure phenomena, may be classified among occultisms. Theosophy, too, by as much as it was made synonymous with “Esoteric Buddhism”¹ and

¹ One of the best accounts of theosophy is to be found in a book by A. P. Sinnett, entitled “Esoteric Buddhism.”

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a "Key" for its explication was furnished by its foundress, is rightly regarded as an example of modern occultism. It should be noted in passing, that the title "Esoteric Buddhism" has of late been abandoned by theosophists and for the excellent reason that the Buddhism of Gotama, the Buddha, was the very opposite of esoteric. Just before his death he said to his disciples: "I have preached the truth without making any distinction between esoteric and exoteric doctrine. I have no such thing as the closed fist of the teacher who keeps some things back." Esoteric teaching in Buddhism dates from several centuries after Gotama's death. Moreover in the theosophical work just cited, all that Mr. Sinnett says concerning "astral body," "animal-soul," "atman," etc., is *openly* set forth in the "Yoga" philosophy, long since made accessible to English readers.

To speak of modern occultism suggests the antithesis, ancient occultism. There were many occultisms in ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, and Palestine, and many of them bear resemblance to those with which we are familiar. They all alike aimed to raise the souls of men above the transiency of perishable matter to an immortal life, salvation meaning escape from

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the tyranny of an omnipresent fate and the assurance of a life which death could not quench. The Eleusinian mysteries, the Orphic and Dionysian cults granted their votaries the privilege of transcending the boundary of death, entering the very presence of the Gods and receiving from them mystic communications. Among the ancient Jews in the days of their tribal organization, "divination" was a profession and a kind of spiritualism obtained, witness the story of Saul's intercourse, through a medium, with the deceased prophet Samuel. When Christianity was struggling for the religious control of the Roman Empire there occurred an invasion of Syrian and Persian occultisms, a swarm of quasi-religious rivals all entering in fierce competition for religious supremacy.

In the days of Caracalla lived Appollonius of Tyana whose mystic healing powers were such that the emperor worshiped him as a divine being. He made no use of drugs or other material healing agencies. He extended his art to absent treatments. He drew no distinction between functional and organic diseases since God is the healer and He is omnipotent. Moreover, Appollonius held that any person might

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become an agent of the Divine Healer by entering upon a course of spiritual preparation and developing faculties not ordinarily employed.

Let these few illustrations suffice to indicate the prevalence of ancient occultisms having more or less kinship with those known in our own day.

To avoid possible misunderstanding let me say at once that I am not a spiritualist, not a theosophist, not a Christian Scientist. I am not identified with any of the modern movements that partake more or less of an occult character.

We shall confine our attention to three such movements, all alike conspicuous for their respective contributions to the belief in immortality: spiritualism, psychical research, and theosophy. Each of these has offered a foundation of its own for the faith in human survival of death and therefore compels consideration in a course of lectures devoted to this question. But it will be well, if, by way of introduction, we consider the ethical attitude toward these occultisms, more especially as I find that among intelligent, respectable people, unwarranted opinions and sentiments, the product of preju-

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dice born of ignorance, still obtain regarding them.

We shall the more justly evaluate the bases on which they build the belief in immortality if we first fix in our minds and hearts the spirit that should control our judgment of their respective claims.

Pray do not confuse what is meant by the ethical attitude with the attitude of the Ethical Movement. Let it be clearly understood that by the latter we mean strict neutrality toward these movements even as toward all open or debatable questions. It would be suicide for the Ethical Movement to commit itself to the distinctive position taken by Spiritualism, Theosophy, or the Society for Psychical Research. Members of an Ethical Society are entirely free to belong to any religious or occult congregation they choose, only they must not seek to make the society sponsor for their particular views. Membership in an Ethical Society means simply devotion to the moral life, recognition of the supremacy of the *ethical* end over all others that may be named, self-dedication to the "ever-increasing knowledge, love and practice of the right," let the members' theological and philosophical beliefs be what they

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may. Friendly, receptive, hospitable toward all other religious movements the Ethical Movement certainly is, but it depends *for its very life* on maintaining a wholly noncommittal position toward them all. It cannot be for or against any of them because the priceless freedom of the Ethical fellowship forbids. Every leader of an Ethical Society is perfectly free to discuss such movements from the platform, but his individual views commit no one but himself. For him to commit the society to his position would be to undermine its cardinal characteristic of freedom. When, therefore, we speak of the attitude of the Ethical Movement toward the cults now under consideration we have reference to its complete neutrality. To this might be added its radicalism. For the Ethical Movement in its approach to such systems of thought is much more interested in their roots than in their fruits. In the case of Spiritualism, for instance, it concentrates attention on the alleged phenomena of spirit intercourse rather than on any formula intended to explain them. In the case of psychical research, its prime concern would be with the living medium rather than with the departed communicator. If Christian Science were the sub-

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ject of its investigation, the Ethical Movement would again be radical in its attitude, i. e., it would go down below the mode of healing to the real nature of the disease to be cured, seeking to know *that* rather than spend itself at once on the proposed remedy which, however excellent, *might not* be applicable to the disease in question.

But now, by the ethical attitude toward these movements something much more general and fundamental is meant. It is the *spirit* in which one who would understand and estimate them should approach them. That spirit can be described by a single word, *appreciation*, a composite of justice and love, one to which man, through the ages, has been slowly climbing; the spirit that blushes at persecution, disdains mere forbearance and is dissatisfied even with tolerance, which to many seems the very acme of spiritual attainment. But no, tolerance is not the loveliest flower on the rosebush of liberalism, not the *ne plus ultra* of attitudes. Tolerance implies a certain measure of concession. We tolerate what we can't help but would put out of the way if we could. Tolerance has an air of patronizing condescension about it. He who tolerates affects an air of offensive superiority that is irresistibly resented.

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Tolerance is the willing consent to let other people hold opinions different from one's own. Appreciation is eagerness to do full justice to their opinions, the generous assumption that they have something of worth which may enrich one's own thought and life, the sincere conviction that if the system they represent contains error, it is kept alive only because of the truth-germ which it hides. Appreciation is the spirit which likens the hundred and more sects of the Christian religion to the stops and pedals of a vast organ, some stressing the essential, others the ornamental notes, none of itself yielding the full-orbed music, but their harmonious blending producing the symphony of human aspiration and faith. Appreciation is the spirit which turns to the founders of the great historic religions not with a polemical but with an eclectic purpose, asking of each: What have you to offer? What can we borrow from your gospel to enlarge and deepen our modern life? Instead of singling out Moses or Jesus as though he alone had all the truth the world needs, appreciation bows reverently before them all, esteeming each according to the truth he has to teach and the inspiration that may be drawn from the story of his life.

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Similarly toward spiritualism, psychical research, and theosophy the spirit of appreciation exhibits a corresponding regard, granting to each a respectful hearing, persuaded that its thesis has some measure of truth and the more unpromising its appearance the more diligent the search. Instead of rudely relegating these movements to the limbo of the ridiculous and irrational, the spirit of appreciation will endeavor patiently to determine what life-giving elements they contain, what needs they satisfy, what wants they supply, all the while remembering with modesty the vast firmament of thought under which we move, and watchful for each new star that the guiding heavens may reveal.

And when we pass from the *exposition* of what these systems stand for to a criticism of their respective claims, the ethical attitude requires that we criticize not only with logic but also with love. Again and again has it happened that men armed with logic and the facts, with rhetoric and a rich vocabulary, have yet carried no conviction because they lacked "the one thing needful," because they spoke not "the truth in love." I borrow this phrase from the New Testament Epistle to the Ephesians, written to the Christian converts at Ephesus in

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Asia Minor. Having been but a short time before converted from the religion of the Roman empire to Christianity, they were filled with that enthusiasm and zeal which usually characterize converts in the first weeks of their conversion. There was imminent danger that in the fervor and glow of their reaction from the Roman religion they would speak disdainfully and contemptuously of the old faith from which they had withdrawn. Consequently the writer of the epistle, a follower of the Apostle Paul, beseeches them to abstain "from all malice and wrath and anger, speaking the truth in love." In that final phrase the ethical attitude is succinctly expressed. Ridicule, vituperation, malicious epithets, wrathful words, on the lips of critics, would-be reformers, protestors against error, carry no conviction, correct no error, advance no truth. The experience of centuries has proved that 'tis to the combined agency of sincerity and love, quite as much as to that of reason and the facts, that the world owes whatever conversions have been made from error to truth. There is but one way to abolish superstition and that is by absorbing and assimilating whatever truth there is in it. The way to suppress quackery, whether in medicine, phi-

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losophy, or religion, is not merely to punish the quacks, but to do in a scientific way what they try to do after the manner of the charlatan.

Not long ago a clergyman of this city published an article on Thomas Paine. I note that several times he referred to the author of the "Age of Reason" as "Tom," "infidel," "atheist." Did that minister think he was helping the cause of Presbyterianism by heaping opprobrious epithets on his victim? Would not his argument have carried more weight, not to mention Christian dignity and grace, if instead of vilifying the man he hates he had said what he regarded as the truth, in love? Were Thomas Paine to return to earth this preacher would owe him a most humble apology. As it is, he owes such an apology to the American people for whose welfare the sincere, honest, patriotic, public-spirited Paine gave the power of his pen and voice; for it was out of the heart of Thomas Paine that the American doctrine of independence was born. He was the first to use the phrase, "United States," the first to insist that they must be independent.

When Colonel Ingersoll with bold, defiant iconoclasm, tore down the walls of superstition

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which Christian dogmatism had reared, he took a brave part in the gigantic task of leading the faith of the past on to the faith of the future. But alas, his unscholarly utterances, his unwarranted ridicule and misplaced wit created a vast deal of harm which it will require years of calm, temperate, kindly utterance of the truth to repair. A raw rationalism that speaks with fliprant and irreverent tongue never yet won its way to human hearts, whereas a ripe rationalism, born of scholarship and reverent regard for the fact of evolution, never fails to produce a wholesome effect and to promote the cause of truth.

When the late, lamented Heber Newton addressed a thousand young men on the influence of this Goliath he did not descend to the indignity of calling him "Bob," or "the Colonel" or "blasphemer." He religiously refrained from the use of all insulting epithets and spoke his message with a dignity, sincerity and love that could not but carry conviction. The result was that those young men received a just and discerning estimate of what the great orator had done for the world.

If ignorance and prejudice blind a man's eyes to what the Ethical Movement really stands

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for, we may try to show it forth by attacking his ignorance and prejudice but we shall be doomed to failure. Only as we anoint the blind eyes with the salve of our sincerity and touch the darkened heart with the light and warmth of our love can we succeed. Every successful reformer has had sincerity and love at the heart of his reform. These are the two angels that must ever guide us. Refuse their company, repudiate their lead, abjure their inspiration and we enlighten no souls, establish no reform.

A friend has just sent me a book entitled "The Religio-Medical Masquerade," written by a Boston lawyer. Here are the opening sentences:

"Christian Science is the most shallow and sordid and wicked imposture of the ages. Upon a substratum of lies a foundation of false pretense has been laid. Never before has the world witnessed a masquerade like that of Christian Science. The founder of this pretended religion, this bogus healing system, has throughout her whole long life, been in every particular precisely antithetical to Christ." Obviously in these heated terms the author describes, ~~not~~ Christian Science, but his own irritation, impotence and unworthiness. The temptation to

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indulge in vituperative epithets is very strong and subtle, but it is always a positive detriment to the progress of truth and to the moral development of him who yields to it. For not only does this practice develop in him the evil qualities conveyed in his invectives but it also reduces his capacity for dispassionate judgment, besides making him increasingly unsympathetic, uncharitable and unlovely. Vituperation is like the boomerang which returns upon its projector. Believing this profoundly and intensely and having sought for years to profit from it, permit me now to say that if in succeeding lectures any criticism of mine on any of these movements be construed as manifesting an unkindly or contemptuous spirit it will be misconstrued; and it will be in regretted contradiction of my purpose if I let slip a single careless word that shall wound the reverence of even the most sensitive soul.

V

THE CARDINAL CLAIM OF SPIRITUALISM

The ethical attitude toward spiritualism, as indicated in the preceding chapter, requires that we take it seriously and not assume that there are any finalities or infallibilities precluding the possibility of its possessing any truth. Whatever our estimate of the movement may be we are bound to acknowledge that it has made the world its debtor by its repudiation of those grotesque beliefs about death and the hereafter that were transmitted from medievalism to the modern world. If we no longer look on death as a demon, a curse, a symbol of divine wrath, if we regard a hereafter of endless psalm singing and harp playing as altogether devoid of attractiveness, we have to thank the spiritualists for their special service in promoting these salutary changes in religious thought.

The ethical attitude makes a further requirement of us. It is that we state the position and

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claim of spiritualism as fairly and as strongly as a representative would, avoiding both understatement and exaggeration together with everything that savors of disparagement or contempt. Bigotry has no head and therefore cannot reason logically. Bigotry has no heart and therefore cannot feel tenderly. Who would not exchange a hope for a demonstration, were it possible? And who would think of foreclosing investigation by pronouncing demonstration to be impossible? Because many of the phenomena of spiritualism have been proved fraudulent, dare we, on that account, turn our backs upon all? What moral justification can there be for those thinkers, who, with a dilettante air, spurn scientific investigation of spiritistic phenomena? Or what warrant can there be for asserting that "the question of immortality is degraded by approaching it through the channel of these phenomena?" In all probability coming generations will be disposed to attach great importance to the belief in a hereafter only as it shall be reinforced by evidential means. Special significance therefore attaches to careful examination of whatever purports to be proof of human survival of death. No alternative is open for the candid mind but to ex-

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amine the alleged proof and determine what measure of reliance, if any, may be put upon it. I, for one, cannot ignore the fact that certain scientific investigators of acknowledged distinction have, as a result of their researches, gone over to the spiritistic hypothesis and based upon it their faith in a future life. I cannot ignore the fact that some years ago the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the foremost organization of its kind in the world, saw fit to find a place for spiritualism among the subjects to be discussed at its annual sessions. Nor, again, can I overlook the fact that there are certain spiritistic phenomena which still continue to tax the intelligence and baffle the interpretative skill of skeptics who, for years, have vainly striven to prove them fraudulent and at last felt compelled to admit their genuineness, whatever the explanation of them might be. Despite all the fraud which it was thought would relegate the new "ism" to the realm of extinct religions, it is on the increase, constantly welcoming new recruits to its ranks. Statistics show that there are over one hundred thousand avowed spiritualists in some five hundred societies, owning property worth two millions of dollars or more. Besides

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those who openly avow their identification with spiritualism there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, who confess their sympathy with it only to themselves and to intimate friends. Hence no one can tell the precise number of adherents that spiritualism may claim. These facts challenge attention because they prove that in spiritualism there is something that thousands find satisfying, something not furnished by other religious organizations. Therefore, though I am not a spiritualist, I absolutely repudiate the attitude of indifference as well as the dogmatic religion and the dogmatic science which dare to fix the limits of possible knowledge of post-mortem conditions.

What is the cardinal claim of spiritualism? To answer that question authoritatively we must consult the constitution of the National Spiritualists Association which registers the collective vote of all spiritualists in the United States as to what spiritualism stands for. Articles IV and V of the "National Declaration of Principles" read as follows: "We affirm that the existence and personal identity of the individual continue after the change called death." "We affirm that communication with the so-called dead is a fact scientifically proven

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by the phenomena of spiritualism." From this it is clear that the cardinal doctrine of spiritualism, the one on which the movement hinges (*cardo*, a hinge), is belief in personal immortality based on spirit-intercourse, i. e., the communication of departed spirits with living persons. Differ as spiritualists may on theological questions or on the explanations of spirit-intercourse, all unite in affirming such intercourse to be a proven fact, a truth established by actual experience. They base their belief in a future life not on scripture texts, not on unverifiable intuitions, but on facts which, they claim, can be investigated by well-established methods.

The natural history of the movement dates from 1848, when two sisters, Mary and Kate Fox, in the town of Hydeville, N. Y., heard rappings and were promptly put into communication with alleged spirits who directed them to the cellar, where the skeleton of a murdered man was found. Under the guardianship of a Miss Fish, these two sisters traveled and gave public exhibitions of spiritistic phenomena. And while on the one hand the unbelieving made fun of the little Foxes with their sister Fish, on the other hand, there were those who rejoiced that now, at last, and out of the mouths

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of children, materialism had been utterly confounded.

Two years later (in 1850), Daniel Douglas Home, a Scotch emigrant, was observed to be in possession of strange "mediumistic" and other occult powers, causing great excitement in both Europe and America. Soon other persons, similarly endowed, appeared and their "psychic" phenomena were thrown into the cauldron which the little Fox sisters had set bubbling. Small wonder then that a new form of religious organization was forthwith created. It grew with astonishing rapidity, gaining in fifty years more converts than Christianity had made in the first three hundred years of its existence.

But now, while the direct and immediate cause of the rise of spiritualism was none other than this succession of strange phenomena, the indirect, remote, ultimate cause lay in the spiritual famine which was superinduced by scientific discoveries, biblical criticism, and philosophical materialism. These combined agencies had robbed the popular religion of its old familiar sources of consolation without offering a substitute. The doctrine of spirit-intercourse supplied the chief lack. Personal immortality, attested by actual communication of

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living persons with those deceased—this was the manna provided by spiritualism for the soul-starvation of the time.

Even to the skeptic, the agnostic, the materialist, the new movement made its appeal. It said to them: See, I bring you not Bible texts, not vague surmises or mere intimations or an intuition; I bring you evidence; judge for yourselves the worth of the proof of personal survival of death which the phenomena furnish. But, in its early enthusiasm and zeal, spiritualism went too far. Like other movements in the first days of their success, spiritualism overshot the mark. It attributed *all* strange phenomena to the agency of spirits. Thereupon, what might be called a restraining injunction was served by the Society for Psychical Research, resulting in a reduction of the number of phenomena hitherto ascribed to spirit agency. But of this more in the next chapter.

The popular objections frequently urged against the spiritistic hypothesis need not detain us long. They are easily answered. Let me state and briefly refute the more important of them.

“Why do not the spirits come to us directly, instead of through a medium?” Perhaps be-

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cause we are not sensitive enough. One might as well ask: Why doesn't a telegraphic message come over a string instead of over a wire? We are not justified in denying a thing simply because we cannot explain it.

"Why do not the spirits come *at once*, when summoned by the medium?" Surely it would be deplorable were our departed friends not preoccupied, idly waiting to be summoned by a medium. If they do still live we share Mrs. Phelps' conviction that they must be engaged in useful activity of some sort¹ and this would explain their failing to make *immediate* response.

"Why, if genuine, are the phenomena so recent?" They who ask that question betray their ignorance of history. Spiritistic phenomena are anything but recent; 'tis only the scientific study of them that is recent. Spiritistic phenomena are as old as man. Tylor, in his "Primitive Culture," makes mention of them as known to primitive man. The Old Testament records the case of King Saul communicating with the departed prophet Samuel by the aid of a medium.² In the New Testa-

¹ E. S. Phelps: "Gates Ajar."

² I Sam. 28.

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ment we read of a phantasmal appearance of Jesus to the Apostle Paul, the latter hearing out of a bright light in the sky the words "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?"¹ To many of the early followers of Jesus it was certain that he had risen from Sheol and that he had been seen alive.

"Very odd it is that, if genuine, the phenomena should be disputed." Well, I suspect that Galileo thought it rather odd that astronomers should dispute the reality of the moons of Jupiter. No doubt Harvey thought it very odd that the doctors of his day should dispute the circulation of the blood; Darwin, too, must have deemed it very odd that only one man in the United States, Professor Asa Gray, should have championed his discovery of natural selection as explaining in part the origin of species.

"Why are the reported messages mostly gibberish?" Assuming that they are such, that is no reason for denying their reality. Sense or nonsense, they have to be accounted for. Since this course of lectures was announced, I have received in my daily mail considerable correspondence of a mixed character. Because

¹ Acts 9:4.

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some of the letters contain what might perhaps be called "gibberish," does it follow that they came from nobody? Moreover, the trivial character of the communications is *not necessarily* to be ascribed to "an abnormal condition" of the alleged spirit, for the abnormality may inhere in the medium's mind at the time the message is being transmitted to the sitter. In the case of an insane person we infer insanity from what he says and we have our verification at first hand, whereas in the case of the alleged spirit we have to take the word of the medium and without any proof that the alleged discarnate personality actually exists. It may therefore well be that the disappointing character of most of the reported messages is due to some abnormality or enfeeblement of the medium in the hour of communication.

Add to all this the probable transit of the message (if it comes at all) in the form of mental images or pictures (which the medium describes), rather than in precise words which the medium can repeat. And if these images were of a kind wholly unfamiliar to the medium, this would account not only for the fragmentary and often meaningless character of the reported messages, but also for the failure of the medium

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to state anything intelligible concerning the manner of life in the beyond. Thus a further objection to the spiritualist's position is reasonably met. And if the counter-objection be urged that this notion of mental images passing from an extraneous source through a medium to a sitter is wholly conjectural, the obvious answer is that the mysterious facts stare us in the face and the spiritistic explanation is at least reasonable and, we may add, more acceptable in the present state of our knowledge, than any of the alternative hypotheses that have been proposed.

“How seldom the spirits tell us what we want to know!” But this may well be the sitter's fault. If he is foolish enough to consult a medium expecting information that cannot reasonably be given, he deserves to be disappointed. You consult a “business” medium to find out whether it is wise to buy fifty shares of “Steel Common,” or, perhaps, a block of “Mexican Petroleum.” But what reason can there be for supposing that an ordinary, average person who has departed this life should be able to give you the desired advice, any more than an ordinary, inexperienced person still here on earth? If you could be certain that the me-

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dium is connecting you with, let us say, the late Mr. Pierpont Morgan, or with the late Mr. H. H. Rogers, there would be some justification for your visit to the medium. It is irrational to suppose that anyone who has passed into "the life beyond" is *thereby* qualified to give you a "tip," regardless of what his calling was while here on earth.

The Roman Catholic cardinal who frowned upon spiritualism, not, as he said, "because it is mere foolishness" but because the spirits are "wicked and depraved," overlooked the fact that he could well afford to be indifferent to the moral character of the spirits if only he could be certain that they *were* spirits.

Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy in her "Science and Health" has devoted a chapter to "Spiritualism vs. Christian Science." On page 74 we read: "The so-called dead and the living cannot commune together for they are in separate states of existence or consciousness." But how can Mrs. Eddy know that they are? Whether or no they *can* commune is precisely the question at issue.

Further on in the same chapter we find it stated that "without the intercession of material personalities called 'spirits,' spiritualism

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has no basis on which to build." But when, or by whom, were spirits ever conceived as "*material* personalities"? So to designate them is to do *violence* to the ethics of interpretation, for no spiritualist would indorse this designation.

Again, it has been urged that "so much fraud has been perpetrated as, necessarily, to discredit the whole movement."

It is true that in 1851 the rappings of the Fox sisters were explained in terms of "dislocated toe-joints" and that in 1888 one of the sisters gave a demonstration of just how the rappings were produced. It is true that in 1887, under the auspices of the University of Pennsylvania and by the generous financial aid of a Mr. Seybert of Philadelphia, a scientific investigation of a number of spiritistic phenomena was conducted resulting in the revelation, by this Seybert Commission, of a vast deal of fraud. In the course of its procedure it exposed the fraudulent methods practiced by Slade, the celebrated medium and slate performer. Professor H. H. Furness, a member of the commission, showed how mucilage had been used by a medium to restore to its original condition a sealed letter and how, in another

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instance, the wax with which the envelope was sealed had been broken. But now, on the other hand, it is equally true that certain scientific men of the highest rank found themselves face to face with another group of phenomena, *wholly free from fraud*, and of such a nature as to warrant their acceptance of the spiritistic hypothesis. To these scientists and the phenomena in question we shall return in the next chapter. Suffice it now if we simply note that no number of communications from a world beyond could possibly prove the *universality* of survival. We cannot infer that if any individuals survive, then all must do so.

So far, then, as popular objections to the claim of spiritualism are concerned, it is clear that they have no weight.

And while there are eminent scientists who have been so impressed by the highest types of psychic phenomena as to see in spiritism the only satisfying explanation of them, it should be noted that over against these scientists stand others of equal repute and ability who have declared themselves not yet convinced, not yet prepared to indorse the claim of spiritualism. And the grounds of their refusal to commit themselves are chiefly the following: (1) that

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psychology is still in its infancy, or at most, in its childhood; (2) that the whole field of psychic operations needs to be more fully explored; (3) that all the resources which might serve as explanations have not yet been exhausted; and (4) that we should never fall back on any supramundane means of explanation until we have absolutely done with terrestrial sources. Certainly, no one ought to accept a theory that is not in itself convincing or just, because it has no rival. No one ought to accept a theory merely because it is the only one available, for that would be to make of the theory an opiate for the uneasiness of suspended judgment. Alas, that in these days of widespread liking for precipitancy, for short cuts, and quick results, the difficulty of suspending judgment is enormously increased. The American "promoter" has for his motto, "Get rich *quick*." I know Christian Scientists whose motto is, "Get health *quick*," and Socialists whose cry is, "Get social health *quick*." So there are people who have espoused occultism, hoping thereby to get knowledge of the hereafter, *quick*. Strange as it may seem, even the realm of science is not free from men with a passion for settling upon an explanation rather than suspending judg-

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ment till *all* the evidence is in. When Kepler discovered that the planets moved not in circles but in ellipses, he had no means of accounting for that strange phenomenon. Yet he felt bound to furnish an explanation for it. Accordingly he broached the belief that each of the planets is attended by an angel, who personally conducts the planet round in its elliptical orbit! Soon, however, the law of gravitation became more thoroughly understood and when it was found equal to accounting for the elliptical movement, the guiding angels were dismissed. Similarly in the field of psychic phenomena, it may yet be possible, through increased knowledge, to dismiss the spiritistic hypothesis in favor of terrene agencies adequate to explain them. But here we come to the threshold of our next subject, the Counter-claim of Psychical Research.

VI

THE COUNTERCLAIM OF PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

The claim of spiritualism to have demonstrated the reality of life after death rests on a number and variety of psychic phenomena. Included among these are clairvoyance and clairaudience, i. e., the seeing and hearing of what is not discernible by the senses, apparitions, ghosts, the hauntings of houses and places—above all, the phenomena of mediumship. A medium may be defined as a person who seems to lend himself (or herself) to some other being or beings, imperceptible to our senses, in order that they may manifest themselves to us. We have seen that the attitude toward these phenomena has been anything but uniform. Some persons have accepted them all at their face value; others have entertained doubt as to their genuineness; others, again, have rejected them *in toto* as products of a diseased imagination. Yet, notwithstanding the doubts and the denials, the phenomena continued to occur

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and also the disputes as to their reality, until, in the last quarter of the last century, it was felt to be a crying shame, a "scandal of the age," that no systematic, organized effort was anywhere being made, either to determine the validity of the phenomena or to settle the disputes. Certain eminent scientists felt themselves challenged to recognize and explain the phenomena or forever after hold their peace. And so it came about that in February, 1882, in London, England, there was formed the Society for Psychical Research, the first organized attempt to undertake systematic investigation of these mysterious phenomena. Three years later an American branch of the parent society was formed. Each organization has published, annually, a volume of *Proceedings*.

The popular notion of the personnel of these societies is expressed in such phrases as the following: "a soft-headed, easily-duped lot"; "harebrained searchers," "miracle-lovers," "novelty-cravers."

But a mere glance at the names of the men who have officered the societies proves how mistaken that popular notion is. I doubt if there is another organization in the world that can boast of so many hard-headed, cautious, critical

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members; men and women dominated by that deep-seated skepticism which is exacting in the extreme in its demand for evidence.

The first president of the parent society was Professor Henry Sidgwick of Cambridge University, a man noted for his absolute impartiality in discussing evidence and for his constitutional caution in coming to conclusions on debatable subjects.

The second president was the Right Honorable Arthur J. Balfour, author of "The Foundation of Belief," a work which instantly stamped him as a hard-headed thinker with a rare capacity for sifting evidence and for holding his judgment in suspense.

The third president was Sir William Crookes, inventor of the Crookes tube, which played an important part in the development of the X-rays; a man who, for over thirty years, stood in the very vanguard of the English scientific world.

When Gladstone, England's illustrious prime minister, was invited to become an honorary member of the society, he, the controversialist (with Huxley), the Christian apologist and biblical exegete, in his letter of acceptance said that he regarded the work of this society as

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"the most important work that is being done in the world, by far the most important."

Not least in the long line of eminent men who have occupied the presidential chair is Sir Oliver Lodge, a physicist of the first rank, who conditioned his interest in spiritistic phenomena by their susceptibility to treatment by scientific methods of investigation. He held that this method is as applicable in the realm of spiritual realities as in that of physical. He positively refused to ally himself with the agnosticism that affirms the inability of science to reach truth in this realm. In his recent address before the British Association for the Advancement of Science he said: "I am one of those who think that the methods of science are not so limited in their scope as has been thought; that they can be applied much more widely, and that the psychic region can be studied and brought under law too. Allow us anyhow to make this attempt. Give us a fair field. Let those who prefer the materialistic hypothesis by all means develop their thesis as far as they can; but let us try what we can do in the psychical region, and see which wins."

Among those who have officered the American branch the following may be mentioned:

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Professor Langley, who for so many years was head of the Smithsonian Institute at Washington; Professor William James, of Harvard University, one of the clearest and closest thinkers of our time, and author of the most readable book on psychology that has yet been produced; Professor James H. Hyslop, of Columbia University, a man to whom we all are deeply indebted for having contributed to our literature a most illuminating essay on the Society for Psychical Research; Dr. Richard Hodgson, of Boston, the sincerely and deeply lamented secretary, a man whose genius for detecting fraud has been surpassed by no one, whether at home or abroad, a man who declared it to be his fixed purpose to explain, if possible, all psychic phenomena without resorting to the spiritistic hypothesis. He felt bound, as a scientist, to operate every other theory until it broke, before admitting that any supramundane force was at work.

Let these illustrations suffice to indicate the caliber and character of the personnel of the Society for Psychical Research, at home and abroad.

The object of the society, it should be carefully noted, is not to prove or disprove any

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theory, but to investigate and report upon psychic phenomena and the persons identified with them. A paragraph from the official prospectus states precisely the purpose of the organization. "The society, as a body, was not and is not committed to any views upon the various problems with which it proposes to deal. It aims to approach these problems without prejudice or prepossession of any kind and in the same spirit of open inquiry which has enabled science to solve so many problems once not less obscure nor less hotly debated."

Here, for example, is a human mind in what is called the trance-state, absolutely oblivious to everything that transpires in the external world. In that state this mind tries to reveal the identity of someone no longer living on earth. The name, or part of the name, is given, amid much incoherent automatic talk. Features are described, incidents recalled, seemingly to give assurance that this person still lives. The problem is, whence these trance-utterances? Do they come from the departed, and if not, how shall they be explained, and what light, if any, do they throw on the question of life after death? Accordingly the society addressed itself to systematic study of

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spiritistic phenomena. On the one hand it conducted experiments with clairvoyants, clairaudients, mediums and also with hypnotic subjects, i. e., persons in a psychophysical condition of increased suggestibility. On the other hand, it collected data concerning hallucinations, apparitions, and ghosts, with a view to determining their real character and the inferences to be drawn from them.

The question at once suggests itself: Are these investigations and experiments worth while, or, have they merely an intellectual, speculative interest? Were the latter the case and one felt that no serious practical importance attaches to all this research work, how could a lecture on the subject be justified? Orthodox science, I know, has poured considerable ridicule upon the undertakings of the society and even branded them "preposterous" and "pernicious." On the other hand, heretics, like Crookes and Lodge and Wallace, have found in certain results of research a new reason for believing in immortality. Most of us, perhaps, are unable to share that view, yet we must not let our lack of agreement or of sympathy therewith blind us to the real worth-whileness of the work of the society.

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Let me indicate some of the respects in which this work has been justified: (1) It has settled many a dispute concerning the genuineness of phenomena by proving them to have been fraudulent; exposing the unscrupulous methods adopted by people who, in search of the easiest way to make a living, simulated the phenomena of honest mediumship. (2) During the thirty-three years of its existence the society has investigated scores of cases of "materialization," of "levitation," of human bodies being lifted into mid-air without any perceptible assistance; instances of furniture being mysteriously moved from its place, of musical instruments being played upon without any visible contact; of the slate-writing wonders enacted by Dr. Slade and others. Without exception, according to Secretary Hodgson's report, the investigators found evidence of fraudulent contrivance, or manipulation, or both. (3) The society has taught us who are not expert observers to abandon the notion that we are competent to judge of the genuineness of psychic phenomena or the merits of a *séance*. The truth is that very little weight can be attached to the ordinary spectator's account of what has been seen, so easy is it to report it inaccurately or to miss seeing

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what is most essential. Who of us, lay people, can accurately describe the familiar trick of the professional conjurer and deny, *on the basis of what we have seen*, that the watch was smashed, that the handkerchief was burned up, that the crown was knocked out of the silk hat? The reason we cannot deny what we have seen is that we watched closely the right hand, to which the conjurer turned our attention, while he did the trick with the left. How ridiculous is the notion that anyone with a pair of good eyes is competent to decide, at a séance, whether fraud is being perpetrated or not! The vast majority of us are no more capable of forming a trustworthy opinion of what is being done than we are competent to pronounce on the genuineness of a Syriac manuscript. Even such highly trained observers as Crookes and Lodge, Wallace and Myers, were, at times, deceived. It therefore behooves us, untrained observers, to refrain from attempting to pass acceptable judgment on phenomena from which the hypothesis of fraud is not to be eliminated. (4) The Society for Psychical Research has shown that the human mind is a much more complex and inclusive affair than was supposed, that consciousness is a speck of light illuminating

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only a part of the total self, that the human mind is like an iceberg, of which two-thirds is below the surface of the sea. Here again, then, in its effort to know what lies below the surface of our awareness, the worth-whileness of the society is made manifest. (5) The discovery of the influence exercised by the subconscious in the causation of disease is one of the recent triumphs of psychopathology and it may be traced in part to the work of the Society for Psychical Research. Nor is it an unwarranted expectation to look for light from this source on certain forms of insanity still regarded as incurable. (6) If the phenomena that seem to point to the reality of a future life are false, the world cannot afford to be fooled by them. If, on the other hand, the phenomena are true, the world cannot afford to remain ignorant of them. Hence the mighty significance of a society devoted to research in this field.

We are thus brought directly to the cardinal claim of spiritualism as affected by the investigations of the Society for Psychical Research. In a word, those investigations have resulted in taking some of the "shine" out of spiritualism. In their passionate revolt from philosophical materialism, the Spiritualists exagger-

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ated their claim. They attributed *all* psychic phenomena, *all* mediumistic messages, to the agency of spirits. But the Society for Psychical Research soon tempered the claim by showing that many such messages—indeed, the great majority of them—could be explained without calling in the aid of spirits. By setting up alternative hypotheses the society took some of the shine out of spiritualism. The late Frederick Myers, who for years was a leading representative of the society, classified the substitutes for the spiritistic hypothesis under two heads. First, the mind of the medium. From this source come most of the messages, even though they refer to matters which the medium once knew but had forgotten, because what once entered the mind may again come out of the mind even though it be amid trance-conditions. Second, thought-transference or telepathy, i. e., the direct and supersensuous communication of mind with mind. By the transmission of facts not known to the medium, from someone at a distance or from someone present at the sitting, a goodly number of “cases” may be explained. But there is, says Myers, an “irreducible minimum” of messages that cannot be classed under either of these two categories;

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messages containing facts known only to a deceased person and that person an utter stranger to the medium, thus seeming to compel the conclusion of the survival of the departed person. Included in this "irreducible minimum" of messages not explicable in terms of the medium's mind or of telepathy are those reported, in a trance-state, by the celebrated Mrs. Piper.¹ Grant that some of her successful revelations are the result of *chance coincidence*, others of *clever conjecture*, still others of tapping the inner recesses of the *sitter's consciousness*, thus giving back to the sitter his own ideas as communications from the spirit world, yet there is a residuum of cases that call for a more adequate explanation than any of these, cases that cannot be subsumed under any of the categories already named, cases in which she has given such lifelike personations of deceased people that relatives have hailed them as the very spirits of the dead. Nay more, disinterested expert investigators, men devoid of the expectations and sympathies that characterize relatives and friends, have felt that there was no alternative hypothesis but the spiritistic to account for what was revealed. In the ninth

¹ F. W. H. Myers: "Science and a Future Life," Chap. I.

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chapter of his *magnum opus*, "Human Personality and its Survival after Death," Myers cites a number of such cases. A peculiar pathos attaches to this chapter in that the author died while he was at work on it, while accumulating evidence in support of the belief in immortality.¹

In the early days of their organization Spiritualists regarded ghosts, apparitions and kindred phenomena as evidences of spirit-agency. The Society for Psychical Research, by offering terrestrial explanations, has taken still more of the shine out of spiritualism. These phenomena have been traced to one or another of two sources. Either they are the result of thought-transference from one mind to another and apprehended by that other in the form of an hallucination of the sense of sight or of hearing, or else they emanate directly from the subconscious self of the seer as purely mental images. Granting thought-transference to be a fact, it is quite credible that a telepathic hallucination may be so strong in us that we seem to see objectively what is only a subjective

¹ The famous experience of Sir Oliver Lodge at his first sitting with Mrs. Piper is given in Bruce's "Adventures in the Psychical," pp. 150 ff.

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image. For illustrations of both these causes no more satisfactory book can be recommended than the "Census of Hallucinations" by Edmund Gurney, a distinguished member and officer of the Society for Psychical Research and one who specialized in this field of investigation. The well-known book by the Misses Morrison and Lamont, entitled "An Adventure" furnishes an admirable example of a real ghost emanating from the subconscious mind of the seer. Both these ladies had seen, at the Petit Trianon, in Versailles, the ghost of Marie Antoinette. But the two visions differed in certain particulars, the reason being that the seers' subconscious knowledge of the place and the period differed. The fact of differences in the two accounts of what had been seen could scarcely be explained on the hypothesis of a supramundane agency. Moreover Gurney's "Census" shows that the number of reported apparitions of the living was twice as large as those of the dead, and the spiritistic hypothesis would not be required to explain this larger group. But in as much as we know psychical states only in direct and immediate association with physical conditions, no trustworthy deduction can be made from apparitions. And even

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were it admitted that personality could survive death for a time (as perhaps in the case of Phinuit, Mrs. Piper's "control,"¹ who has not been heard from since 1897), it would not prove that such personality could perdure forever.² To assign any value to apparitions of the dead as evidence of their survival is impossible so long as their independence of all material association is unproved. And this is the weakest link in the chain of the spiritistic argument.

Within recent years the Society for Psychical Research has abandoned all investigation of "materializations." It did so on the ground that the conditions under which these phenomena are exhibited do not preclude the possibility of fraud. Moreover these phenomena, alleged to be the work of spirits, have been equally well produced by conjurers. Furthermore, it was perceived that "materializations" could not prove the identity of the person concerned since, for this, *psychical*, not material, phenomena are required. Accordingly the so-

¹ The identity of this French physician has never been established. Is he, perhaps, a "secondary personality" of Mrs. Piper?

² See the *Journal of Religious Psychology* (April, 1912), pp. 200 ff.

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ciety turned its attention exclusively to these, to hypnotism, clairvoyance, telepathy, and above all to the trance-utterances of mediums as affording the most promising evidential ground for belief in discarnate spirits and the possibility of holding intercourse with them. Most renowned of all the mediums that have aided the society in these investigations is Mrs. Leonora Piper of Massachusetts. This lady has won the respect and approbation of all the researchers, because of her honest earnest desire to aid them in their seeking for the truth, because of her absolute freedom from deception, having successfully met every test to which it was put, and because of the unusually high degree of accuracy in her trance-utterances.¹ Indeed so remarkable have been her revelations that Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Crookes, Mr. Myers and Mr. Hodgson adopted the spiritistic hypothesis as seemingly the only possible basis on which to explain what Mrs. Piper had made known to them. To quote Sir Oliver Lodge: "Already the facts examined have convinced me that memory and affection are not limited to that association with matter

¹ See the biographical sketch, by M. Sage translated by Noralie Robertson, with an introduction by Sir Oliver Lodge.

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by which alone they can manifest themselves here and now, and that personality persists beyond bodily death. The evidence, nothing new or sensational but cumulating and demanding prolonged serious study, to my mind goes to prove that discarnate intelligence, under certain conditions, may interact with us on the material side, thus indirectly coming within our scientific ken; and that gradually we may hope to attain some understanding of the nature of a larger, perhaps ethereal, existence, and of the conditions regulating intercourse across the chasm. A body of responsible investigators has even now landed on the treacherous but promising shores of a new continent."

But over against these representatives of the Society for Psychical Research stand others equally entitled to pass judgment on psychic phenomena and who have remained unconvinced as to the reality of discarnate spirits and the genuineness of alleged intercourse between them and persons still in the flesh. More especially must mention be made of Mr. Frank Podmore and Professor William James. The former was for over thirty years an investigator in this field. After examining most cautiously and exhaustively all the recorded utter-

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ances of Mrs. Piper, he declared that "not a single instance can be pointed to in which a precise and unambiguous piece of information has been furnished of a kind which could not have proceeded from the medium's own mind working on the material provided and the hints let drop by those present at the sitting." I quote from Mr. Podmore's "Modern Spiritualism," a book which can only be characterized as one of the most judicial, crystal clear, balanced works in the literature of psychical research; "a veritable mine of critically sifted material" it is and as such it should be worked by every one wishing to form adequate judgments on the subject. All the more imperative is study of this work because the press has given the public a preponderance of testimony in favor of spiritism. There is need of restoring the lost equilibrium of judgment by seeing the other side.

Professor James, as readers of his "Psychology" know, stood neither for "spiritism" nor for the theory of man's "soul."¹ The latter he regarded as a "name, masquerading," the former as "not proven," though he stood ever ready to "undeafen his ears and revoke the

¹ See Vol. I, pp. 182, 209 *et al.*

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negative conclusion if growing familiarity with these phenomena should tend to corroborate the hypothesis that spirits play some part in their production.”¹ This negative position of both Podmore and James has been considerably strengthened by the fact that communications, purporting to come from men of recognized ability and attainments while on earth, fall lamentably short of what we have a right to expect from them. “George Pelham” for instance (to keep the pseudonym by which he is known), was an author of highly praised philosophical books. But when interrogated by the medium as to the relation of mind and body, he was unable to give a single intelligible answer, revealing a curious incapacity for using abstract terms. Rev. W. Stainton Moses, a scholarly priest of the Anglican Church, is another example. He became suddenly aware of mediumistic power while suffering from theological doubt. When asked by the medium to tell the names of the two controls mentioned in his book on “Spirit Teaching” he gave other names.² Even Mrs. Piper, at times, when test

¹ *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, Vol. 23, p. 29.

² True, this may have been due to error on his part while

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questions were put to her relating to those whom she was said to have summoned from the beyond, gave no answer.

Additional strength is given to the negative position of skeptical members of the Society for Psychical Research by the case of Miss Hannah Wild of Boston, who just before her death left a sealed letter which was to serve as a test of spirit-intercourse. No one but she knew the contents of that letter. She gave her sister, Mrs. Blodgett, precise instructions to let no human hands touch that sealed letter until she herself, through a medium, should reveal its contents. At several sittings Mrs. Piper tried to read the letter and the final outcome of her efforts was that in every particular save the name, the reading was wrong. Mr. Myers, Dr. Hodgson, and Professor James, all left sealed letters to be opened only after the medium had been summoned and attempted to make known their contents. But, to date, no summons has been received from any one of the three and, what is equally disappointing, such messages as are reported to have come from them deal with most trivial incidents, the color of a pen-on earth, the new names being the correct ones. But even so he did not answer the question.

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knife, the smoking of a cigar, the wearing of a suit made in London, etc., etc. Professor Hyslop's theory to account for the disappointing character of these messages is to the effect that the medium at the time of the sitting becomes aware of the *total* consciousness of the deceased and thus knows not what, out of the mass of material, to transmit, becoming in consequence confused, contradictory, erratic in her utterances. But even so, we are warranted in expecting at least a fair measure of relevancy in the communications and in its absence the theory fails to satisfy. To attribute the prevailing triviality of the messages to "an abnormal condition of the spirit at the time the communication was received" is surely unwarranted. Why assume that abnormality obtains so often? And may not the abnormality be in the medium rather than in the spirit at the time of transmitting the message? Reference has already been made to this in the discussion of popular objections to the claim of spiritualism.¹ A third explanation for the persistently trivial character of the messages is that "the channels of communication are faulty," our minds being "hampered by their connection

¹ See p. 74.

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with our bodies.” But we know mental activity only in association with bodily organism and hence we dare not assume that consciousness is “hampered” by bodily association. Moreover what warrant is there for the assumption that departed spirits are bodiless or that thought is necessarily “better” or “higher” when freed from bodily connection? For all we know, the spirits may be clothed in some form of matter imperceptible to us. Thought, too, in association with body, may be “better” than when freed from it.

Concerning telepathy, it should be realized that this is only a name for thought-transference. It tells us absolutely nothing as to the *mode* of transmission. It expresses merely the idea of transmission without the use of the ordinary sensory channels of communication. Consequently the appeal to telepathy in accounting for psychic phenomena is just as much an appeal to the unknown as is the spiritistic hypothesis. To be sure, if there be such response between souls separated by great distance, it *suggests* (it does not prove), that if we can get on at times without the ordinary channels while still on earth, we may be able to dispense with them altogether. That a human

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mind should be able to reach down into the stored memories of some other mind, and from the mass select just the one pertinent to the given occasion, defies explanation in the present state of our knowledge. To say that telepathy has its analogy in the phenomena of wireless telegraphy is to assume too much. The analogy breaks down at an important point. For while, in the latter, messages weaken according to the distance they travel, in the case of telepathy the messages are often clearest and strongest when sent from the greatest distance.

That telepathy is a reality "proven beyond all question," no one will admit who is familiar with the essay of Professor Simon Newcomb, or with Mr. Podmore's "Naturalization of the Supernatural." Both these writers are of the opinion that the alleged transmitted messages really come from within the receiver's mind and that further knowledge of its operations will verify this assumption.

Before leaving the response of Psychical Research to the claim of spiritualism, mention must be made of Myers' doctrine of the "subliminal self" as furnishing a foundation for faith in human survival of death. In the *mag-*

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num opus already referred to, the doctrine is set forth in full detail and with the same literary grace observed in all his earlier writings. According to Myers there are within us two fields of consciousness separated by a threshold (limen). That mental activity which lies below the limen of ordinary consciousness is the *subliminal*, while that which lies above this and within normal consciousness is the *supraliminal*. The subliminal (or subconscious) is thus a sort of reservoir in which are stored up powers acquired through education and experience and extending beyond the normal capacities of the mind. Now it was on the reality and powers of this subliminal self that Myers based his belief in a future life. He held that the conscious (supraliminal) self is only a small part of the total self; that beneath conscious personality extends a much larger and immortal subliminal self. To use his own words: "The conscious self of each of us, as we call it, the empirical, the supraliminal self, as I should prefer to say, does not comprise the whole of the consciousness or the faculty within us. There exists a more comprehensive consciousness, a profounder faculty, which for the most part remains potential only so far as regards

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the life on earth, but from which the consciousness and the faculty of earth-life are mere selections, and which reasserts itself in its plenitude after the liberating change of death.” It is not strange that a view as romantic as this and presented with exceptional literary charm and having, moreover, the sympathy though not the support of Professor James,¹ should have been eagerly hailed by those hungering for tangible testimony to the reality of life beyond death. By all such the *magnum opus* was joyously welcomed as offering a new source of religious faith. Indeed there were those who felt that the doctrine of the subliminal self had come to light just in the nick of time when the old religious forts were giving way under a fire of criticism and science. For now it was seen that science (in the work of Myers) had become the ally of faith. Philosophical materialism and historical criticism might do their very worst yet only the outworks of religion would be open to their attack and the man of faith would find himself safely ensconced within

¹ Professor James was too keen a psychologist, too pragmatic a philosopher to consider Myers’ conception of the subliminal self as “established.” He was by no means persuaded that the subconscious portion of the mind had sufficient unity to warrant our regarding it as a personality.

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the impregnable fortress of the subliminal self.

Thus the inutile character of the subconscious self in the struggle for existence together with its powers extending beyond those of normal consciousness and in no way correlated with our present environment; this it was that made Myers feel he had an all-sufficing basis for belief in survival after death. But there are certain serious objections to be urged against this view. In the first place, it is by no means proved that such a subliminal self exists in every human being. The fact is that in normal persons it does not appear. Only in pathological subjects does there seem to be within one and the same mind a chief and a subordinate center of life, capable, moreover, of dissociation so that separate personalities may function in one and the same body.¹ So far as evidence goes "subliminal" consciousness in normal persons is, if not nonexistent, practically negligible, while in pathological subjects it is distinctly inferior to the supraliminal.

In the second place if the supraliminal self we all know and on which we spend our years,

¹ See Dr. Morton Prince's "Dissociation of Personality."

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bringing it into ever closer approximation to completeness, is to die and the subliminal to survive, what shadow of reason can there be for continuing the educative task? Why should immortality be accorded to the subliminal self, and the supraliminal, which we have labored to develop, be annihilated? Why bestow the supreme gift of eternity upon a problematical self of whose capacities in normal persons we know nothing and whose connection, if any, with our better known self is equally unknown?

A third objection relates to what is perhaps a physiological *sine qua non* of subliminal power. Can the subliminal self persist apart from physiological conditions or are its processes dependent upon a physical organism? Judging the issue by our experience in ordinary mental processes, all of them physiologically conditioned, we should say that these extraordinary processes, if such there actually be, are likewise so conditioned. Nor does Myers say a word to support the belief that the subliminal self can perdure independently of a physical organism.

The results of our inquiry may be briefly summed up as follows:

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1. Hitherto no valid generally satisfying evidence has been adduced to warrant belief in actual intercourse between deceased and living persons, whether through Mrs. Piper or any other medium. In no instance has the identity of the alleged communicator with the deceased personality been established beyond all doubt.

2. Hitherto the subject matter of alleged communications, reported in the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research, is such as to deepen whatever doubt may already exist as to their supramundane source.

3. Hitherto the existence of either normal or subliminal consciousness *apart from* some form of bodily organism has not been proved. And the burden of proof rests with the spiritists because we know mental states only in connection with bodily organisms. For aught we know, the spirits, if such there be, exist in some sort of material form as yet beyond our power of perception. It is interesting to note in passing, that neither in the Old Testament nor in the New is "spirit" equivalent to "immaterial."

4. Hitherto no one has shown that the spiritistic hypothesis is the *only possible* explanation of that "irreducible minimum" of medium-

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istic messages which, in Myers' estimation, compels acceptance of that hypothesis.

Professor Hyslop holds that "we are reduced to spiritism or telepathy. No other mode of explanation is open to us." But may it not be that we are not yet far enough on in our knowledge of the field of possible explanations to settle down upon one or the other of these alternatives, or to form any hypothesis that is adequate? The scientific attitude, in the light of all the objections that may be urged against adoption of the spiritistic theory, would seem to be *suspense of judgment* together with continued patient and thorough investigation of all promising phenomena and deeper penetration into partially explored sources of explanation, such as the recesses of the medium's mind and the subconscious suggestion of the sitter. Who knows but that in proportion as the conditions leading up to a test message are known and the characteristics of the medium and of the sitter are fully discerned, we shall find the mysterious nature of the messages perplex us no more.

If it be urged that the spiritistic hypothesis is "simpler" than any naturalistic one, instantly the inevitable reply will be: That depends upon our state of culture. To the sav-

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age it seems simpler to believe that the sun rises and sets than that the earth's motion accounts for what he sees. To children it is simpler to believe that barrels rolling in the heavens produce thunder than laboriously to trace its relation to electricity. Similarly to many adults it is simpler to believe in the agency of spirit-intercourse than to study the manifold hereditary and social relations, the conditions of nerve cells and sense organs and mental processes which may explain the test messages delivered by mediums.

Finally, in an age of unprecedented scientific advances, an age that has witnessed wireless telegraphy and telephony, the discovery of "neon" and of the "discontinuity of matter," we should be slow to postulate extramundane agencies till this darkest Africa, the human mind, has been more fully explored. It is an established canon of investigation that in the search for causes the mundane realm should be thoroughly worked before resorting to non-terrestrial agencies. Undoubtedly there are aspects of Mrs. Piper's mediumship that, for the nonce, defy explanation in terms of any known agencies, yet from fuller mastery of hypnotism, or of thought-transference, or of subliminal

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activity, in the mind of medium or sitter, the necessary light may still be forthcoming to explain to our entire satisfaction the entire brood of mysterious phenomena.

On the other hand it must be confessed that in the *present state* of our knowledge the spiritistic hypothesis explains Myers' "irreducible minimum" of phenomena better than any other, cases in which information has been given by a medium which, it would seem, could not possibly have been taken from the mind of any person living on earth. Hence the conviction that psychical research has established a modicum of probability that some satisfying sign may yet be given us of the reality of discarnate spirits. No unbiased champion of the spiritistic hypothesis would claim that a *demonstration* of the reality of a future life has been furnished even by the most astounding of the phenomena made known to us. Nothing has been adduced as yet which offsets the objections that have been offered to acceptance of the spiritistic hypothesis and until unanimity among those competent to judge has been reached, verification remains unrealized.

VII

THE THEOSOPHICAL BELIEF, REINCARNATION

It would be a mistake to infer from the title of this chapter that reincarnation is a cardinal doctrine of the movement known as theosophy. Membership in a Theosophical Society is not conditioned either by acceptance or denial of the doctrine. But, in as much as most, if not all, theosophists believe in reincarnation, we are warranted in describing it as a theosophical belief.

It seemed worth while to include it in our study of foundations for the faith in a future life because, while somewhat in disfavor among orientals, in whom the doctrine has generated a sort of spiritual ennui, in our western civilization it is more popular than ever, thousands upon thousands hailing the doctrine as the sole satisfying solution of the problem of physical and moral evil and an adequate substitute for the popular conception of immortality.

A further reason for giving it our attention

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is its bearing upon the dark facts of our earthly experience, such as the glaring inequalities of human life, the seeming injustices that obtain among all sorts and conditions of men. Surely we can ill afford to treat with indifference a movement that seriously attempts to cast a ray of light into our darkness, to meet our innate demand for justice. Moreover, in its teaching of reincarnation, the Theosophical Movement offers a view of man's future estate which must be deemed the most plausible and the least repellent, infinitely preferable to the Christian conception of Heaven and its rewards, of Hell and its punishments; to be ranked, indeed, as the most engaging and consoling of all historic theories of the hereafter and having, withal, the indorsement of the most ancient of religions.

The doctrine of reincarnation holds out the hope of our realizing some day the meaning of life's limitations, struggles, handicaps. It repudiates the idea of leaving this earth forever, with its problems for the most part unsolved, as tantamount to irretrievable defeat and therefore it teaches return as necessary and inevitable if we are to win out at last and learn the *whole* lesson of life's meaning and purpose.

The modern Theosophical Movement, rooted

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in ancient Hindu and Buddhistic thought, was founded by Mme. Blavatsky, in 1875. By reason of its oriental derivation the movement has done much to disabuse western minds of mistaken notions concerning the peoples of ancient India and their sacred literature.

Until the coming of the Theosophical Movement the average Englishman and American thought of Hindus and Buddhists as benighted, ignorant pagans whom it was a duty to subdue and a charity to enlighten. But through theosophical enterprise in translating, publishing and disseminating the literature of these peoples, the traditional sentiments regarding them have been changed and the liberalizing truth of the *universality* of moral and religious ideas has become a commonplace of religious thought. The increasing popularity of the "Bhagavad-Gita" or "Song of the Blessed One," dealing with all the deepest problems that concern the spiritual life of man, is due to the generous enterprise of theosophists who made provision for its publication in attractive, inexpensive forms.

I am not a theosophist. Were I one, I would not hesitate to call myself such. I may be pardoned if, in response to the statement that I

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am "just a bit afraid to call myself a theosophist" I appeal to my religious history, which, if it proves anything, proves that I am not afraid to wear any label that rightly belongs to me.

The word "theosophy" means, literally, divine wisdom, insight into God's nature, processes and purposes, particularly in relation to man and his destiny.

There never was a time when men did not claim to have some such divine wisdom. Consequently modern theosophy takes its place in the evolution of such speculation, its founders having worked out a complete system of faith and practice. On the basis of "divine wisdom," she sought to replace the dogmatic Christianity, the chilling agnosticism and the crude materialism which alike had failed to satisfy souls hungering for a religion that would meet the needs of the heart and of the head.

"Humanity," said Mme. Blavatsky in her inaugural address, "is today like an orphan crying for guidance and light. Amid the increasing splendors of a progress purely materialistic the spirit has been starved. Humanity is stretching out its hands for a religion

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that will satisfy, and the Far East furnishes it." *Blavatsky*

She even went so far as to say that the conviction is dawning on Spencer and Tyndall that the "Unknowable" can never be known except through Hindu esoteric doctrines. In passionate pleading tones she asked: "What is there in this restless, dissatisfied world for us who have outgrown the creed in which we were raised? Is the Unknowable to be forever unknown?" And her answer was: "The Masters have taught us the secret of the Universe."

We are thus introduced to the source whence "divine wisdom" is derived. In her "Key to Theosophy" Mme. Blavatsky says: "We call them 'Masters' because they are our teachers, from them we derived all the theosophical truths. Some they delivered directly, and some they inspired, leaving the literary form to the witness." She called them "Mahatmas," borrowing a well-established Sanskrit word meaning "great souls" and used in India to describe persons who have retired from the world, who have subdued their passions and gained a reputation for sanctity. So generic, however, is the Indian use of the term that the late Max Müller occasionally received letters

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addressing him as "Mahatma" in place of "Professor." In official theosophical documents we read that these "Mahatmas have completed their human evolution; they have attained perfection; they have reached what Christians call salvation and Buddhists, liberation. They have consciously liberated themselves to the course of their being. Though fitted to enter Nirvana, they voluntarily remain on earth in order to form the connecting link between human and superhuman beings. Out of ~~HATRED~~ compassion for ignorant, undeveloped souls, they wear again the fetters of the flesh, the burden of gross matter and give themselves to be saviors of men, guardians of humanity. They remain in quiet, retired and secluded spots, away from the ~~DESTRUCTIVE~~ turmoil of human life, in order to carry on their ~~helpful~~ work, which would be impossible to accomplish in the crowded haunts of men and a civilization composed of money and glory of the personality. At certain times in history, in serious crises, in transition times, according to cyclic law, they come out from their retreats into the world and deliver a portion of their total store of knowledge to disciples, or messengers, to impart that message to the world."

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Without pausing to discuss either these claims or Dr. Hodgson's unfavorable report upon them, published in the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research, let us simply note that whether his charges be well-founded or not, Mme. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Movement are not synonymous terms. Neither the manners nor the morals of any individual theosophist can be construed as representing the entire movement.

Turning our attention now to the doctrine of man's destiny as held by the great majority of theosophists, we find that fundamental thereto is the belief in an impersonal, infinite, eternal principle or power, manifested in both spirit and matter. The cosmos is considered as "evolving on seven separate planes." Beginning with the denser and moving forward to the finer these planes are: the physical; the emotional, or astral; the mental, or heavenly; the intuition, or Buddhic; the spiritual, or Atmic-Nirvanic; the Monadic, or world of origins; and the Divine World, or world of the Logos. Of these seven cosmic planes we are told that they who have the time and the ability can so develop as to come into conscious relation with each of the higher worlds. Theosophy teaches

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that human evolution has reached a stage where it is possible for new senses to be developed, keener, subtler, more sensitive than the five now normal senses and equal to bringing consciousness into direct touch with the finer phases of matter, imperceptible save as these higher senses are cultivated.¹ Mrs. Besant, speaking for her fellow-theosophists, has specified two particular senses yet to be developed; nay more, she has indicated "two little organs in the brain, the 'pituitary body' and the 'pineal gland,' —organs which were once active but have become atrophied, of which only a remnant remains, no longer utilizable," as the instruments through which these new senses will work.² But, far from being "atrophied" and "no longer utilizable" these glands fulfill functions absolutely indispensable to the well-being of our physical system.

Medical science has taught us that without the pituitary gland, metabolism is greatly disturbed and growth seriously affected, witness the results of observation and experimentation conducted in hospitals and laboratories both

¹ Mrs. Annie Besant: "Popular Lectures on Theosophy," pp. 10, 11.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 90, 91.

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at home and abroad.¹ "We theosophists," says Mrs. Besant, "declare, not on theory but on observation and experience, that these two organs are rudimentary, preparing for the future." Just what this implies our theosophical friends do not tell us. On the other hand science has demonstrated that these two organs have, ever since the appearance of man, been functioning to sustain the harmonious operation of bodily conditions and even of life itself.

Corresponding to the seven planes of the cosmos are "the seven divisions of man," to wit: physical body, life-principle, astral body, animal-soul, mind, soul, and spirit. The physical body is animated by the life-principle. The astral body invests the life-principle while the animal-soul is the seat of our desires and passions. These four are material and consequently perishable. Nevertheless they fulfill a distinct and indispensable service as instruments for the remaining three, which are immaterial and, therefore, imperishable.

Thus, according to theosophy, Man, *essential* Man, having a body, is a triune being, consist-

¹ See the illuminating chapter in Dr. A. P. Brubaker's "Physiology," especially pp. 458-459 (4th ed.).

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ing of mind, soul, and spirit, this last "a spark" from the absolute Spirit, possessed by *all* human beings and therefore constituting "the basis of the brotherhood of the humans." Thus each personality is a kind of omnibus carrying a number of passengers through the journey of life, one or more stepping off at successive stations on the road. At the first station, called "death," the physical body and the life-principle get off, leaving the astral body (which has detached itself from the physical) to continue the journey with the other four passengers. At the next station, called "Kama Loka," or "place of desire," somewhat analogous to the Roman Catholic Purgatory, the astral body and the animal-soul alight, leaving in the omnibus the three immaterial, imperishable passengers (mind, soul, and spirit). The next station is called "Devakan," or "place of the Gods," somewhat analogous to the orthodox Heaven, and here a prolonged halt is made. A beautiful resting place it is, between two periods of activity. Here the triune being gathers up the total of his past experience till at last the time arrives for his reincarnation. He returns to earth to repeat (an unknown number of times) the life journey already described; the last jour-

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ney culminating in “a vanishing in the Glory to reappear perhaps in some distant day as an Avatar, or Divine Incarnation,” to use the words of Mrs. Besant.¹

We are thus brought, by this speculative process, to the central doctrine of reincarnation. It has a great intellectual ancestry. Not only was it entertained by Hindus and Buddhists for thirty centuries or more, but it was accepted also by one of the earliest and best known of the Christian sects, the Gnostics. To the student of the sources of modern theosophy it is interesting and suggestive to compare the “*Pistis Sophia*” (The Wisdom of Faith), a celebrated Gnostic work, with “*Isis Unveiled*,” or with the “*Secret Doctrine*,” or, again with the “*Key to Theosophy*,” all three written by Mme. Blavatsky. Professor F. Legge, in an article contributed to Littell’s *Living Age*, commented in the following terms upon the relation of the later works to the earlier treatise:

“I think that if the doctrines of the Theosophical Society are compared with what has come down to us of the Gnostic tenets, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the latter system is not only the same in all points as the

¹ “*Lectures on Theosophy*,” Chap. II.

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elder, but that the coincidence is too close to be the result of accident."

Referring to reincarnation the writer remarks:

"In like manner, the theory of purification by reincarnations, which Colonel Olcott defends in his lectures, and which Mr. Sinnett has elaborated in 'the Occult World' and 'Esoteric Buddhism' can be found very tersely given in the following passage of the 'Pistis Sophia' where, after describing the passage of the soul of the dead through the several spiritual worlds, it is brought before 'the Judge, the Virgin of Light,' and she tries that soul; and in case she shall find that soul to be sinful. . . . she delivereth it to one of her receivers, who will see that it be placed in a body befitting the sins that it hath committed. And verily I say to you, she shall not let the soul be released from the changes of its bodies until it shall have accomplished its uttermost cycle in the shapes whereof it may be deserving."

After citing other passages from the "Pistis Sophia," Mr. Legge says:

"Anyone who will take the trouble to refer to the work from which I quoted above will have no difficulty in recognizing in the Gnostic

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writings nearly every term used by Theosophists which is not, for obvious reasons, expressed in an Oriental language."

In closing his series of comparisons, he makes the following unequivocal statement:

"Taking all these facts together, they seem to form a very strong proof that the system of the Theosophical Society has not been handed down from prehistoric times by secret and mysterious means, but has, on the contrary, been copied (*en bloc*) from the relics of Gnosticism."

Think as we may of this contention, it would certainly seem clear that Mme. Blavatsky was thoroughly familiar with the Gnostic document, either directly or indirectly, and that its existence does away with the notion that modern theosophy is an original system.

The idea of reincarnation had its origin in ancient India in the period of the primitive Aryan religion known as "Vedism." The religion of the "Veda" had its Paradise for the good and its Hell for the morally bad. But one day an unknown Hindu speculating on death and the hereafter doubted the correctness of the Vedic theory. He questioned the *continuance* of the life in Paradise reserved for the righteous. What if the good deeds done while on

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earth warrant only a *limited* life in Heaven? What if the measure of virtue acquired on earth entitle one to only five years of Paradise, or ten, or twenty years? In that case, death will come again and immortality become a dream. And if a man can die in Heaven once, why not many times? From such reflection it was but a single step to the belief that the law of compensation operates not in the strange, unknown, distant Heaven, but here on the familiar earth, death and rebirth occurring over and over again until sin and virtue have adequately and completely received their respective punishment and reward, each death followed by rebirth into a condition determined by the net result of conduct in all earlier lives.

Thus the notion of rebirth, once entertained, was duly developed into a clearly defined doctrine based on the law of cause and effect and called in Sanskrit "Karma." It has its Christian equivalent in the familiar apothegm of the Apostle Paul, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Emerson stated it in the terse phrase, "The dice of God are loaded." Karma means deed and the effect of deed on the subsequent character of the doer. The thinking and the thought, the doing and the act, all

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pass away, but not without leaving enduring traces on the character. These are called "Samskaras," deed-structures, the preservation of which makes reincarnation possible. Actions, like seeds, bear fruit, some early, some late, in the course of man's successive rebirths and Karma is the mysterious law which binds each life to the one next preceding it.

We are what we are today, good or bad, or good and bad, because of good and bad deeds done in previous states of existence. This present life is only a link in a chain of lives through which we have already passed. We do not remember them but they have left their indelible mark upon us. When a man dies he is reborn into precisely the condition he has deserved as a result of his conduct in earlier lives and he continues to be reborn until he has been fully punished for every sin and fully rewarded for every virtue. Having no recollection of any previous state no one has any knowledge of *how* his moral account stands, or as to *what* his next incarnation will be. Are you suffering in this life? Bear it with equanimity because you are only suffering the penalty you deserve for earlier misdeeds. Are you socially ostracized? It is because of your snobbishness and exclu-

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siveness in a previous state. Are you a confirmed miser? Your miserliness is but the fruit of that seed of covetousness sown long ago. Is a man a murderer? 'Tis because he had been already guilty of excessive anger and evil passion. His bad past has led to this terrible worse present. "Vivisectors," says Mrs. Besant, will be "born deformed in the future." "Inquisitors," too, are "born again deformed" and so are "cruel school masters."¹

Thus, according to theosophy, will and deed, with the character that is their result, rule every destiny. Hence nothing is accidental or predetermined, while rewards and punishments adjust themselves automatically to virtue and vice. Karma and reincarnation form a combination by which Nature develops every human being, the essential person, as distinct from the organism of flesh and blood through which personality manifests on the plane of physical phenomena. In other words, the life-history of a human soul is not thought of, by theosophists, as consisting of a miraculous beginning, *ex nihilo*, at birth—a brief term of physical existence, followed by an unalterable eternity of personal consciousness in Heaven. Rather is

¹ "Lectures on Theosophy," pp. 57, 58.

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that life-history conceived as a succession of births, deaths and rebirths, reaching back to an indeterminable beginning and forward to an equally indeterminable cessation of the Karma-Reincarnation process.

Thus the theosophical foundation for faith in a future life (and lives) is the law of Karma which, operating on the physical, intellectual and moral planes, brings just deserts of reward and punishment to all moral beings according to their conduct. On that law of cause and effect the moral universe rests and theosophists claim that for its *complete* operation other earth-lives beyond the present life are required. Without reincarnation and its foundation in Karma, theosophists hold that injustice would be a permanent characteristic of the moral world and man left without a single respectable motive to make life worth the living.

But the great majority of thinkers are not disposed to carry their thought so far. They hold that in the matter of reward and punishment for conduct the ends of justice are realized regardless of any future life. They readily grant that were reincarnation true it would solve many a vexing problem of human life, such as infant deaths, child prodigies, congeni-

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tal idiots, unfulfilled plans and hopes. But so far as moral conduct is concerned the majority of mankind do not take the theosophical view, but find the requirements of justice met regardless of a future life or lives. In the next lecture we shall see that there is an ethical purpose which can be subserved only by granting personal continuity after death, but no subsequent life (or lives) is needed for securing to us reward and punishment for our behavior while here. Hence to build one's faith in a future life on the supposed necessity of it for the full operation of Karma in the field of moral deserts is to build on sand. That reward and punishment are meted out to us synchronously with every act is a commonplace of modern ethical thinking. The notion that we ought to be paid in gold or government bonds or other material benefit for our good deeds belongs to an outgrown stage of moral philosophy, the traces of which have been preserved for us in the Old Testament.

Yet in so far as theosophy makes reincarnation rest on Karma, or reward and punishment for conduct good or bad, it perpetuates this antiquated moral theory which postulates a hereafter to satisfy the demand for justice.

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Theosophists point to wickedness prospering and righteousness trampled down. They tell of the frequent disparity between virtue and prosperity, and for the outraged, incensed heart they see no chance for requital but in a succession of future lives. Here, for example, is an unscrupulous "sweater" squandering his ill-gotten gains on superfluities, while his ill-paid employees eke out a miserable existence on starvation wages. Here, again, is an unprincipled politician who by bribery secures a well-salaried office which should have gone to the candidate of sterling integrity and honor. Here, once more, is a shrewd and shameless sharper enjoying life in a luxuriously appointed mansion on a fashionable thoroughfare, while the victims of his fraudulent operations occupy ill-ventilated quarters on unfrequented streets and alleys. How shall retribution be meted out to these sinners if there be not reincarnation in which Karma can be worked out? Thus have men founded their faith in immortality on the necessity of compensation for the unrewarded righteous and retribution of the prosperous wicked. Yet not even on this foundation can the faith securely stand. For justice closes up the affairs of the universe at every

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instant, so that were it to be annihilated at this moment the books of judgment would be found balanced and every jot and tittle of the law fulfilled. Natural law leaves no straws for the gleanings angels of another world, but completes its work from moment to moment. In Emerson's essay on "Compensation" he gives no place to reincarnation as part of the full operation of this moral law of cause and effect. On the contrary he shows that no doctrine of a hereafter is necessary for the working out of that law full-circle. When the good man fails, he succeeds. He succeeds in the one and only kind of genuine success, the maintenance of his self-respect, the preservation of his character, the saving of his soul alive; like Rostand's *Cyrano* achieving the paradox of the successful failure. When the bad man succeeds he fails. He fails in the one and only kind of genuine failure, the collapse of self-respect, the bankruptcy of character, the insolvency of soul. No hereafter, then, is required to right these seeming wrongs, because punishment is meted out the moment any law is broken, and the degree of retribution is in exact ratio to the violation of law. Daily we see the demonstration of this truth on the physical, intellectual and moral planes. Vice

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carries punishment in itself, working out terrible consequences for those who disobey the laws of health, both physical and moral. Over and over again has it happened that ruin in the outer life is recognized as triumph in the inner life. With what crystal-clear exposition has Shakespeare brought this truth home to us in the experience of the leading characters of his *Henry VIII*—Buckingham, Cranmer and Queen Katherine! And how, again, in the case of Wolsey, he makes it the burden of his message to show that the deed always returns upon the doer and that he who has done an unjust deed has so far become unjust in himself even as they whose outer life has ended in ruin yet found that the righteousness of the inner life is the highest prosperity. Keep a law on the economic plane and break one on the moral plane or vice versa and the consequences instantly follow on each plane. Milton reading nightly by dim candlelight broke a law of eyesight; he was reading the Bible, but that could not save him from blindness. The ends of justice are attained on every plane. Hence for one to build his faith in a future life on the alleged need of future recompense and retribution is to build in vain.

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But in the estimation of theosophists this Emersonian, Shaksperian interpretation of Karma does not suffice. For them it needs to be supplemented by reincarnation as at once "an intellectual and a moral necessity."

In her "Popular Lectures on Theosophy," from which several quotations have already been drawn, Mrs. Besant takes the ground that "without reincarnation life is a problem that defies solution and the universe unintelligible." ~~FALSE~~
Morally, reincarnation is a necessity because the dark riddles of the moral life remain unsolved without it: ~~MIND IS THE BUILDER~~

"No good person," she says, "can face the moral problems of life without anguish unless he knows reincarnation." Justice and love, she holds, must be "~~ethroned~~ in this universe," unless reincarnation be true. Our sense of justice is outraged, "blasphemed," apart from *this* theory of the hereafter.

But why take so pessimistic and despairing a view of human reason? After all, the great majority of thoughtful people do not entertain the theosophical doctrine nor do they feel hopeless of solving life's riddle. It does not follow that because they cannot accept reincarnation they are doomed to remain forever without a

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solution. Assuredly in the light of what human reason has already achieved we are justified in believing that it may be trusted to solve any problem within the scope of its power. Nay more, the ethics of the intellect makes it a sin for reason ever to despair of itself. Better wait for satisfying evidence of the truth of reincarnation than accept it just because it happens to be the only theory at hand. Deeper than the anguish of living on without a solution is that of having accepted one which turns out to be false! Deeper than our desire for a solution must be our desire not to be misled, fooled, but to know the actual truth, whatever it may be, and then adjust ourselves to it. Furthermore, in so far as the belief in reincarnation is made to rest on its power to "gratify our sense of justice," the belief has only a *sentimental* foundation—on a par with the second of those "minor" foundations for the faith in a future life, discussed in the first chapter.

Far be it from me to dogmatize upon this doctrine of reincarnation, but I cannot ignore the fact that it is by no means established. Most thinkers do not accept it. Indeed it hangs in the air and compares unfavorably with the

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spiritistic hypothesis for which at least some *suggestion* of a basis exists in those mysterious phenomena that won over Professors Lodge and Crookes to acceptance of that hypothesis. To say, as some theosophists do, they "know" they shall reincarnate, they are "conscious of it," "supersensuously aware of it," is simply to abuse the dictionary and impart into words more meaning than they can lawfully bear. No one can be said to *know now* a possible future fact. No one can be said to *know* a state which does not yet exist. Moreover if Karma "necessitates reincarnation for its complete working," whence came the first incarnation? Karma must have some character to operate upon; whence the *first* expression of character? How could there have been a first incarnation at all with no character behind it?

In further criticism of the theosophical belief it must be said that not only have we no recollection of any past lives but we are without any adequate ground for believing that there ever were any. Mr. Sinnett tells us the reason we have no recollection of any past life is that the ethical system involved in the doctrine would "fail in its operation." William Q. Judge, in his "Ocean of Theosophy," re-

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marked: “ ‘Tis a wise provision that we cannot remember because, if we did we would be very miserable recalling the bad deeds of former lives and realizing that the process of release through rebirth is much longer than we imagined.”¹ So Mme. Blavatsky, in her “Key to Theosophy,” declared that “we do not remember because our ego when reincarnated is provided with a new body, a new brain, a new memory, hence it would be absurd to expect this memory to remember what it had never recorded.” The brain, she adds, is “the instrument for the memory of the ego and being new in each life the ego can use it only for the new life up to its capacity.”

Well, if all memory of my temptations, struggles, disciplines, aspirations is to be forever blotted out, then all the moral value of the growth-process is lost for me. “Memory,” says Mme. Blavatsky, “is not an essential element of responsible personality,” but I hold that no moral responsibility can exist where continuity of memory does not obtain.

If, when I reincarnate, I have no recollection of what I have suffered and conquered, of what I have attempted and failed to achieve, then the

¹ William Judge: “The Ocean of Theosophy,” p. 78.

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whole significance of moral progress is lost for me. Had I to believe that I am to return to earth and at the same time forget all about my former life, forget who I was, the steps of my development, who my dearest ones were and who the master-inspirers of my life, I certainly could not look upon it as something desirable, it would mean absolutely nothing to me. Surely, without memory of personal identity, any subsequent earth-life would be robbed of all ethical significance. Why should I take any interest in the personality that is to be domiciled in my “soul-substance” at some future time, or in him who occupied it in some bygone period? What we understand by moral responsibility becomes a pale abstraction if there be no *personal* continuance from one earth-life to the next, no thread on which to hold the beads of experience.

Notwithstanding the denial of memory by Mme. Blavatsky and others, and the reasons they have given for our forgetfulness of past lives, the claim to have retained memory of earlier incarnations is put forth by a number of theosophists. Their leading present-day representative has recommended “inward-turned meditation” as a sure means for recovering lost

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memories of past lives. Her own experience and that of certain friends has been such that they have "compared notes" and found they "recognized each other through the millennia of the past."¹ Say what one will of so astounding a claim the fact remains that it has never yet been subjected to expert critical investigation and that most minds confess they are without any such memories. Over against Mrs. Besant's experience and that of her friends we must register the confession of those theosophists who, on comparing independently written notes on experiences in past lives, found that they agreed in not a single particular. As Mrs. Besant herself rightly says, the claim to have recollection of a past incarnation can be true only for the person who makes it, it is no proof to another. And even if we grant that there are a few persons who think they remember an earlier incarnation it would not prove the reality of that incarnation, simply because the identity of personality cannot be traced through the succession of lives. What we see in physics has no parallel in psychics. Heat, for example, may reappear as electricity, or as light, and the reincarnation, as it were, can be

¹ Mrs. Besant: "Popular Lectures on Theosophy," p. 63.

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proved because the identity of substance can be traced, throughout its successive changes, by an onlooker. But such an onlooker is lacking in the case of the successive editions of the human self.

Modern psychology has acquainted us with the belief that every sensible impression is stored in recesses of the mind and capable of being recalled in an hypnotic or a trance state. But if on returning to our normal condition we know nothing of what we recalled in the abnormal state, how can we be sure that the alleged memories are genuine? And if we fail to recall deeply stored experiences in our present life how can we hope to remember others still more deeply stored and said to be related to an earlier life? Strange that theosophists, whose professed training has given them keener, subtler perception, more penetrating spiritual intuition, have thrown no light on the vexed question of prenatal memory. Arbitrary statements concerning it and the "astral body" and the "immortal triune" personality do not help us; they have no evidential value. Similarly, the reiterated affirmation that return to earth is absolutely indispensable to the perfecting of character through experience must be set down

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as a gratuitous assumption. What warrant is there for assuming that conditions beyond this life are "altogether different" from those on earth and that "unless we return to earth for another birth we are robbed of our priceless heritage of human life"? What right have we to suppose that "our garnered wisdom is useless" unless we come back to earth to make use of what we have stored? When Mrs. Besant declares that there is no opportunity to use this wisdom in another world,¹ she presumes to know what is still hidden from human minds. What justification can there be for making reincarnation or the orthodox Heaven and Hell the sole alternatives open to us in our thought of what the future has in store for us? We are by no means forced to choose between theosophy and orthodoxy, either for an interpretation of moral responsibility or for a doctrine of the hereafter. Instead of explaining the character and condition into which we are born by pointing to past and future lives on earth we may well present the polar opposite theory, while recognizing, in all humility, that it does not solve *all* the perplexing riddles of the moral universe. No theory has yet been worked out equal to doing

¹ Besant: "Popular Lectures on Theosophy," pp. 38, 39.

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that and at the same time acceptable to all who can pass judgment upon its worth. The theosophical view certainly looks plausible and it would undoubtedly solve many a dark problem of the moral order if it were true. But we are without a single solid reason for believing it to be true. Over against the theosophical interpretation of moral responsibility in terms of Karma and reincarnation, I would take the ground that we humans are not responsible for the good or bad qualities with which we were born into the world. I hold that, so far as moral merit is concerned, each one of us starts life regardless of antecedents. If, for example I have been born with a pronounced craving for intoxicants I am not morally responsible for that craving. On the contrary, I am responsible only for the degree to which I yield to it, for the effort I put forth to master it. No matter what my "brute-inheritance" or my human-inheritance may be, I *can* try to control it, to change it, and, what is more, I am conscious of moral responsibility for such effort because within each human being there is a constant residuum of capacity for improvement no matter how many times he fails. The lower animals have their respective traits unalterably

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fixed, but not so Man. Within his power it ever lies to "look upward, working out the beast and let the ape and tiger die." If, therefore, I have been born with miserly or murderous propensities I am no more morally responsible for these than I am for the features of my face. But I *am* responsible for the measure of assent I give to these propensities, for the extent to which I adopt them into my own will, for the struggle I put forth to conquer them and be master of my fate, even as I am responsible for the *expression* my face wears. We all are born with both attractive and repulsive qualities, but moral goodness and badness does not consist in the possession of these qualities; it consists only in what we do with them. Nor does our true self reside in any evil quality that we possess save as we yield to it and take it into our will. To put forth our true self, our thought power and our will power, *that* is the very essence of moral worth in us and never can there be an end to the developing of such worth. For we pursue a fleeing goal; the ideal flies ever before us and it is most passionately pursued when it seems furthest away. Life is growth and it is life only while there is growth. All our powers of thought and will would atrophy and

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die were they not constantly revitalized by fresh deeds of service and new reachings out to the infinite truth. A Nirvana of statical perfection might have its attraction for tired souls, but once rested and refreshed they would wish to resume the upward way.

Reviewing the ground we have covered in criticism of reincarnation and the allied doctrine of Karma, we conclude that as compared with the corresponding teaching of orthodox Christianity we infinitely prefer the theosophical view. Yet, by reason of the grave objections which we must register against the reincarnation hypothesis, we have no alternative but to reject it as fully as we do the Christian conception of Heaven and Hell. The foundation for faith in personal continuity is as unsatisfying in the one system as in the other. If reincarnation be "a fact," as alleged by theosophists, the burden of proof still rests with them. Until something of genuine evidential value shall have been adduced in support of the doctrine we have no alternative but to stamp it *unproven* and build our faith in a future life on some more satisfying foundation.

VIII

THE FOUNDATION IN MORAL EXPERIENCE

We began our series of inquiries with an examination of three minor bases on which the faith in a future life has been made to rest. We saw that all three are defective in one or more particulars.

The alleged *universality* of the faith gives us no warrant for its acceptance, because it is not universal and, even if it were, that would not prove it to be true.

The alleged universal *instinctive desire* for a future life is an equally unsatisfactory foundation because not only is the desire far from universal, but even were it everywhere entertained and instinctively, that would not guarantee its fulfillment any more than in the case of other instinctive desires.

The testimony of *intuition* has probative value only for those who acknowledge such a faculty and find it apprising them of immortality. For those who confess themselves un-

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aware of any faculty within them that transcends reason and gives them direct knowledge of a future life, for all such persons this foundation will make no appeal. Intuition serves as a valid basis in the estimation of intuitionists but not at all in the opinion of those who see in reason man's only and ultimate instrument for determining what is true.

As for the Christian basis, the alleged *resurrection of Jesus* from the grave, this, we have seen, has no evidential value because, according to the Christian view, Jesus differed in *kind* as well as in degree from all other human beings. And even were Jesus only a man, with no supernatural element in his personality (as the Synoptics suggest), his alleged resurrection would merely prove that not *all* men are subject to death. But behind these reasons for renouncing the Christian foundation lies the serious objection that the resurrection, which is offered as proof of the immortality of all believers, is itself in need of being proved.

Materialism, we have seen, fails utterly to substantiate the claim to have disproved the reality of a future life, a claim based on the false belief that brain and thought are related as cause and effect. Two great natural laws

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oppose the view that death ends all. The first of these is the conservation and correlation of energy, or "the persistence of force" as Spencer termed it. Cosmic economy is such that no form of force, be it electric, chemic, thermic, ever enters the void of nothingness, but changes only its form, leaving the sum total of energy the same as before. Mental energy, it would seem, must obey the same principle of indestructibility. True, certain materialists have sought to maintain that, at death, mind-force becomes transformed into "correlated amounts of physical energy." But were this the case it would mean a violation of the law of the persistence of force and what is more, no such materialistic transformation of mental into physical force has ever been observed at the moment of death.

The second great fact which stands in opposition to the idea of annihilation is the "discontinuity of matter," already referred to in the lecture on materialism. Its representative, Haeckel, claimed that the dissolution of the nerve cells and atoms at death, necessarily ended the soul life which is but the "mind-sides of the atoms." But the cerebral atoms, supposed to "create and maintain thought" by the

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“aggregation of their mind-sides,” are found to be not in contact at all but separated by gaps, thus disproving the materialistic contention as to the cause of consciousness, memory and all other mental processes. In short, there is something subtler than matter in the human body and without this subtler something, which forms a continuous, imponderable, invisible, active substance, awareness and sensation would be impossible—a substance to which Professor McDougall of Oxford has given the name “mentiferous ether,” corresponding to the “luminiferous ether” of the interstellar spaces affirmed by physicists. This “mentiferous ether” is thus the bond uniting flesh with pure thought. And, for aught we know, when our earthly life ends this psychic etheric organism, the substratum of the soul, may betake itself otherwhere and manifest itself otherwise; a not unreasonable theory which Coues and Cope and Jevons have indorsed. “For all science knows,” said Professor Jevons, “there may be a psychical body disengaged when the physical body dissolves and decays and there may be in the interstellar spaces the scene of an intelligent activity such as we have never dreamed of on earth.” Elsewhere the same scientist says:

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“Science does nothing to reduce the number of strange things that we may believe. Every step I have advanced in science has removed the difficulties of believing in life after death by disclosing to me the infinite possibilities of Nature.” Science accepting the challenge of materialism to undermine her claim has succeeded so completely that not a vestige of reason remains for the belief that the reality of personal survival of death has been disproved.

The foundation on which spiritualism has rested the faith in a future life, viz., the phenomena of “*spirit-intercourse*,” has been considerably weakened by the results of psychical research, showing that many, and indeed nearly all, of these phenomena may be accounted for without the aid of spirits. On the other hand the observations and experiments conducted under the auspices of the Society for Psychical Research have not resulted either in furnishing a new foundation or in verifying the spiritistic hypothesis. Nor, again, has the alleged reality and peculiar character and activity of the “*subliminal self*,” as set forth by Myers, given us a satisfying substitute-foundation for that of spiritualism. On the contrary, there are, as we have seen, grave difficul-

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ties in the way of accepting Myers' theory, quite as insurmountable as those which spiritism has to face. Whatever further progress in the field of psychical research may reveal, the fact remains that hitherto it has not supplied more than hints, intimations, suggestions of human immortality, and the basis on which faith in it has been made to rest satisfies only a very limited number of seekers after truth. No psychical research has yet succeeded in showing that the alleged spirits are discarnate, i. e., that their activities are independent of material conditions. And all our experience goes to show that mental processes are always found associated with physiological changes.

In the words of Sir Oliver Lodge, "Not one bit of precise evidence in favor of the hypothesis of discarnate intelligence has been forthcoming," so that the burden of proof for the possibility of immortality rests with those who hold that consciousness can exist without a brain. Certainly in the light of our present knowledge we are forced to admit that for immortality we have no *objective* evidence.

Theosophy, discarding the traditional conception of the future life as perpetual residence in a localized heaven or hell, substitutes the doc-

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trine of reincarnation, or successive rebirths into earthly existence. Theosophists base this belief on the law of *Karma* which, for its complete working out of the demands of justice, requires the individual's return to earth again and again until the process of achieving perfect requital for good and bad deeds has been completed. But while this theory has a most attractive aspect by reason of its seeming fitness to solve many a dark riddle of human experience, we are wholly without adequate grounds for believing it to be true. Not only are the vast majority of mankind without the slightest recollection of any previous lives, but what is more, we have no reason for maintaining that there ever have been any. To be sure we want those dark riddles to be satisfactorily solved, even as we crave some sort of recompense for those whose lot in life is so painfully different from what it would seem it ought to be if justice be really at the heart of things. Yet, to accept a theory merely because it gratifies our passionate demand for justice, or because it puts us in possession of *some* explanation and thus relieves our sense of perplexity and suspense, is scarcely compatible with the ethics of truth-seeking. Nor, indeed, do such motives for acceptance of

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a theory lead to anything more than a sentimental basis for our faith in a future life, or lives; a basis every whit as objectionable and unsatisfying as the pragmatism which urges individuals to regard as true the beliefs which they have found helpful to them. As though there were a necessary connection between the truth and the usefulness of beliefs; as though the truth of a proposition were proportional to its utility!

Having thus reviewed the ground covered in the preceding lectures, let us turn to the one remaining foundation which we planned to consider, the foundation in moral experience. This, in my judgment, must take precedence over all other foundations that may be named. For, while it, no more than they, gives us *demonstration*, it does seem to make *immortality* an *ethical necessity*.

But before addressing ourselves to a consideration of the nature and worth of this foundation, it behooves us to guard against a possible misunderstanding. In discussing the ethical attitude to modern occultism it was pointed out that this does not mean the attitude of the Ethical Movement toward it. So here, again, it would be a serious mistake to construe the eth-

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ical foundation for faith in a future life as synonymous with that of the Ethical Movement. For, in truth, this movement offers no foundation whatever for that faith. It dare not offer one without being false to its own distinctive and fundamental position of neutrality on all debatable questions. Representatives of the Ethical Movement are wholly free to entertain and to advocate any argument they choose for the faith in a future life. Equally free they are to accept no foundation and to make it known, publicly, that they are agnostics on this subject. Consequently it should be clearly understood that no one but the speaker is committed by any pronouncements on the basis for belief or disbelief in immortality. My views happen not to coincide with those of most of the leaders of Ethical Societies, but my right to express my honest thought is as unquestioned as theirs, provided I refrain from making the movement sponsor for my views.

Like Professor Adler, I hold that the sole substantial basis for faith in a future life is to be found in the moral nature of man, in a moral experience which every human being may have. It is that the more deeply and intensely we live the moral life, the more fully persuaded we be-

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come that there is something in us which cannot perish. And if to this experience we are privileged to add another, namely, relationship to some other soul, one who lives on a high spiritual plane, one who inspires, uplifts, exalts us, then we are forced to feel that this life cannot go to the void of nothingness, that here also, in this rare personality, is something that must survive. It is in this twofold moral experience that I find the surest and most satisfying ground for the belief in personal survival of death. One cannot live an empty, ephemeral, selfish, worldly life and then expect, by some process of intellectual speculation, to arrive at this belief. You get it only when you find in yourself, or in some other soul, something infinitely worth preserving. It was their immediate perception of holiness in Jesus that made his disciples so sure of his escape from bondage unto death. And their intense consciousness of the possibility of such holiness in themselves persuaded them of their own immortality. That their Master, the incarnation of spiritual greatness, should be shut up in Sheol, among all the rest of the dead, was to them simply unthinkable. Equally unthinkable it was that they who had caught the contagion of that holiness should not share

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eternity with him. Moral experience was their foundation for faith in a future life.

Well enough for the sensualist, the sybarite, the *bon vivant* to say, “I have had a good time for a goodly number of years, I am satisfied and ready to pass out of life into nothingness.” Well enough for the men and women who have lived for the lower satisfactions to feel indifferent to immortality. But for those who have dedicated and devoted themselves to the higher satisfactions of life, for those who have tasted intellectual, or esthetic, or spiritual achievement and who know that the very best they have attained is a mere circumstance compared to what they feel they *could* attain, for them disbelief in immortality is the most difficult thing in the world. Like Plato and Dante and Goethe and Browning, they desire immortality above all else because of the moral experience they have undergone and the passion for further progress it has inspired. In the estimation of such persons, desire for or acquiescence in personal annihilation at death is set down as evidence of defective spiritual breeding. What nobler wish can a man or woman cherish than to continue the task of spiritual sculpture, to go on after death hewing, out of the rough marble

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of life's disciplines and temptations, the statue of perfect character? What more ennobling ambition than to approach ever nearer and still nearer to the ultimate ideal? What manner of man then is he who feels *satisfied* with personal annihilation at death? Surely it is of the very essence of true nobility to wish to be forever such a being as shall help on the welfare and advancement of all who are capable of being helped. When a man tells me that he does not care for personal immortality, that he is satisfied to pass into oblivion at death, I am forced to conclude that he has somehow missed the moral experience that compels the conviction of continuity for his spiritual selfhood; I am persuaded that this man has never experienced deeper and intenser moral living from one year to the next. In answer to the question: Must we believe in immortality? they who have had the moral experience which is our surest foundation for the faith in a future life will reply with Professor Adler: We "admit that we do not so much desire immortality, as that we do not see how we can escape it; on moral grounds we do not see how our being can stop short of the attainment marked out for it, of the goal set up for it"; we feel warranted in "holding fast to

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the root of our selfhood," believing that "the best within us, our true being, cannot perish; in regard to *that* the notion of death seems to us to be irrelevant."¹

Undoubtedly, the belief in immortality is just now on the wane. And this, I take it, is due to the fact that for those who honestly face the belief the difficulties in the way of accepting it are enormous, if not insuperable. There is, for instance, the stumbling block created by physiological psychology which has established with cumulative evidence the correlation between mental activity and physical conditions, seeming to force the conclusion that consciousness cannot survive the cessation of physiological processes. But in our discussion of the materialist's claim we saw that there are substantial considerations which serve to remove this difficulty.

Again, there is the reckless extravagance with which Nature seems to create and destroy structures without their fulfilling the purpose they apparently were designed to serve. Tennyson gave this difficulty forceful expression in his lament that while "considering everywhere the secret meaning" of Nature's deeds he found

¹ Adler: "Life and Destiny," the chapter on Immortality.

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that "of fifty seeds she often brings but one to bear." But the question may fairly be asked: Is this alleged waste really such or is it only a gratuitous assumption which we with our defective knowledge have dared to affirm? My revered professor in philosophy, Dr. J. Clark Murray, has furnished us an irrefutable answer. "A charge of unreasonable extravagance," he says, "logically assumes some standard of limitation by which excess or defect may be measured. But what is the position of a critic who arraigns Nature for unreasonable waste? He forgets that he has passed beyond the region where excess and defect of production can be measured by exactly defined limitations. He undertakes to measure the work of perfect intelligence, of intelligence unlimited in knowledge of reasonable ends, unlimited in command of the means by which such ends may be unerringly attained. Here, obviously, the category of measure, of measurable quality, admits of no application. The infinite is *measureless* in the strict sense of the term."

"It is not then surprising that an attempt to measure the universal intelligence by finite standards of appreciation should betray an amusing niggardliness in its estimate of Na-

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ture's plan and resources. With our view limited by human measures, creative energy must appear lavish in its expenditure; but its munificence is an indication, not of reckless waste, but of a wealth that is absolutely inexhaustible in its resources. If, therefore, millions of blossoms with perfect beauty of form, arrayed in hues surpassing those of 'Solomon in all his glory,' fade away before ripening into fruit, there is no reason why we should lament the waste of their splendor and their fragrance as if we could measure adequately the functions assigned to them in the cosmic plan, and had proved that there was nothing but a meaningless failure in their fleeting existence. And though our narrow criticism may restrict the natural purpose of a seed to its having brought to bear other plants of its own kind, the creative intelligence is not frustrated when countless billions of seeds are converted into the food of a higher life, and thus supply the energy required for carrying the world onward to 'that divine event to which the whole creation moves.' "¹

A third and no less popular difficulty besetting belief in immortality is the universal as-

¹ The *Standard*, January, 1915.

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sociation of mind with some form of matter. The reality of discarnate spirits, existing independently of matter, remains unproven and, in the light of our acquaintance with matter, seems inconceivable. But surely it is conceivable that some form of matter may exist imperceptible to us and which, associated with spirit, fulfills the seeming requisite for the latter's persistence. When we turn from the empirical to the ethical standpoint we find in the moral experience already described what would seem to be an inevitable, unassailable sanction for faith in a future life.

The man of moral seriousness, who looks on life as a sacred privilege and trust, who has visions of heights to which his spiritual nature may climb, who has touched depths of refining spiritual experience—depths that are prophetic of others deeper still; the man who is capable of high and ennobling friendships, whose horizon embraces aims that are exalting and exalted, that man will look on immortality as a priceless boon, not because of any opportunity that it offers for delights and rewards, but because of the opportunity that it offers for continuing the task of spiritual sculpture, for rounding out his character, for completing the

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dimensions of his being, for maturing the great life-purpose that here on earth had time only to blossom, or, perchance, only to bud. For such a man, with such moral experience, conscious of ever deeper and intenser moral living, no alternative is open but belief in survival of his essential spiritual selfhood, to be somehow fitted, equipped for further progress toward "the goal set up" for him, albeit he can form no visual image of this equipment and knows moral progress here only in connection with brain and other bodily equipment.

Consider for example, the attitude of the truth-seeker, who has already gone some distance on the road of study and interpretation of the meaning of the world and found his moral nature deepened in consequence. The further he goes the further does he wish to go. To cease from his noble pursuit after having gathered a few pebbles and shells on the shore of truth's illimitable sea, to go to sleep and never again wake, such a finale may cause no pang or pain to those who give little or no thought to the supreme human problems, but to the man who finds his very life in such serious activity with its moral concomitants, annihilation at death is simply unthinkable.

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So too, the man or woman who has conceived a passion for some large, splendid, unattained service into which all the wisdom and enthusiasm already poured into lesser works of helpfulness shall be gathered up and multiplied and transfigured; how can such an one think to escape immortality? Given men and women of this stamp who conduct their daily lives on the high plane of some great and ennobling life-purpose, and they simply must believe in immortality. Do what they will they are irresistibly forced to the conviction that what they are here for, the task of self-development, will not be left forever unfinished at death. Do what they will, they are driven to the conviction that when, at death, there rises from their hearts the passionate cry, "Give us the wages of going on and not to die," the answer will be received: "Enter ye into the joy of your hope fulfilled."

Disbelievers in immortality would fain persuade us that such lives are not wasted even though they be annihilated at death. We are told that such lives are "saved from annihilation by their effect upon the life of those who come after."¹ But this contention overshoots

¹ Dr. H. Neumann in "Ethical Addresses," Vol. XXI, No. 1, p. 14.

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the mark, for wicked lives are similarly saved. If it be asked, Who can picture the ultimate outcome of a single admirable deed? and the purpose of the question is to show that the good life is not wasted though annihilated at death, a just reply would be: Who can picture the ultimate outcome of a single vicious deed? And who, in view of the terrible incalculable harm wrought by the perpetrators of evil, would contemplate with satisfaction the thought that these lives, though annihilated, have not been wasted? And, if it be further contended that the consolation of those who wrought for the good *in vain* lies in the fact that "their efforts made the right kind of persons out of them," we have to answer that this is cold comfort indeed if the final outcome of creation is to be annihilation of both the good souls and the good will.

It is, then, from the realm of ethics that we get our most helpful light on the momentous question of life after death.

What are we here for? We are here to realize the infinite possibilities of our being, or, to speak more accurately, we are here to enter on the realization of those possibilities. This realization is the supreme good; the will that strives for the supreme good is the good will, and the

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good will cannot die in a universe that is rational and moral.

Nature has written in the constitution of each human being the law of its life—develop the real that you are into the ideal you ought to be. Nature has imposed this moral obligation upon us, to strive for realization of that immanent ideal. But, clearly, that ideal can never be completely realized; it can be only eternally pursued. Perfection is no final, static, completed moral state, but an evolving process. The ideal flies ever before us. We pursue a fleeing goal. Our task is one in which everlasting progress may be made, not one that can be *finally* fulfilled.

We might compare our obligation (to develop the real we are into the ideal we ought to be) to the climbing of some great mountain, the peaks of which rise one above another, each in turn summoning us to reach its height. At each new level we broaden the perspective and deepen the content of our life, while beyond the highest we can see are others wholly hidden from our view.

Yes, the ideal is unattainable and loyal pursuit of the unattainable ideal is our highest possible attainment. As the hyperbola forever ap-

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proaches its asymptote but cannot reach it, so the real we are endlessly approximates the ideal we ought to be, but cannot overtake it.

Most of us only begin the upward ascent, we reach but a little way up the mount Perfection when our climb is stopped by death. Here, then, on the one hand, is Nature imposing upon us the moral obligation, "Be ye perfect," realize the ideal, and here, on the other hand, is death stopping us in our upward march and seemingly bringing that moral obligation to naught. How, I ask, shall we solve the riddle? Clearly we are forced to accept one or the other of two alternatives; either death is not the end of life and there is opportunity beyond death for continuing the ascent of the spiritual mountain, or else Nature defeats the end she had in view in the creating of man. That, I believe, is the logical alternative to which we are forced if we do close and consistent thinking. Nay, more, we can go one step further and say that the loyal, faithful soul, the soul that has been steadfastly loyal in the pursuit of the ideal, in the ascent of the mount Perfection, that soul is *entitled* to continue the pursuit when death has cut short the series of earthly endeavors. If this be a moral universe, if at the heart of the

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universe the principle of justice obtains, then, I say, the loyal, faithful soul, the man or woman who has consecratedly pursued the ideal, is thereby entitled, has a right to continue that pursuit. If we loyally pursue the ideal and that pursuit is the end which Nature has decreed in creating us, then she would defeat her end and be irrational did she allow death to cut off that pursuit. And if faithful pursuit constitutes a right to continue it, Nature would be unethical were she to disregard that right. In the words of Dr. F. F. Abbot, "Personal immortality is an *ethical* necessity." And this is as near to demonstration as it is possible for us to come, in the present state of our knowledge.

The only rational view of our earthly pilgrimage is that of a process of growth, upward and onward endlessly, a *progressus ad Parnassum*. If, then, when that pilgrimage ends, our goal be still like a star shining in the distant heaven and we look up from the low plane of our present attainment to that star, what escape is there from the frightful unreason of such a situation? It is, so far as I can see, that death does *not* terminate the pilgrimage but that somehow, somewhere, opportunity is afforded for the perpetuation of what is essen-

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tially spiritual in us, to the end that it may continue its consecrated devotion to the supreme purpose of its being.

To my reason immortality is the only possible solution of the mystery of life. /Yet I realize the limited character and power of my reason and hence refrain from stating my faith as a dogma. It may be that in the universal plan not a single human being is accounted of sufficient value to the universe to require his preservation. It may be that the universal plan provides for some altogether different solution than that of personal immortality. But that the solution will be both rational and ethical I am bound to believe. In the words of the most widely heard independent ethical lecturer of our time, “If there be no eternity of the subject for whom change exists, it seems to me hopeless to attempt any understanding of the farce of life. Warmly human souls may try to cheat themselves into living for the good of all, but if the whole is a farce, wherein is any good for all? Each merely postpones himself for another and no one lives. Neither kindly utilitarianism nor frank hedonism can cheat us into imagining that the farce of life has a meaning or that there is any stronger reason for vir-

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tue than for life, if *nothing* is *eternal* but *change*. Yet no one believes that life is a farce but those who follow a narrow line of reasoning. If this universe were what the pessimist claims, it would be below the level of human life. No *man* would create such a world, no man would be guilty of bringing into being such a chaos of irrational folly and failure. If the universe be such, then the heart and reason, the highest outcome of the process, are in utter opposition to the whole process, which is impossible.”¹

There is, then, a concatenation of moral ideas and moral experience, constituting a basis for belief in personal survival of death. The haunting sense of incompleteness of character, the consciousness of an infinitely perfect goal, the sense of a constant residuum of capacity to approximate it no matter how many times we slip back, the moral obligation Nature has imposed on us to pursue it, the conviction forced upon us when we earnestly, ardently obey or when we see complete obedience in another, that there is something in that person, as in us, which cannot cease—such is the order of ethical thought and experience which, like the

¹ E. H. Griggs: “*Meditations*,” pp. 189–190.

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hart, hasten my panting soul to the waterbrooks
to quench its thirst at the eternal stream of faith
in a future life.

As yet, no human being knows whether matter is a "precipitate of mind" or mind a "sublimation of matter." This, in truth, is the measure of our ignorance that when we are talking of origins, we do not know exactly whence we came; and when we are discussing destiny, we do not know precisely whither we go. What, then, remains between these two ignorances? There remains the kind of behavior we adopt between them. We have to choose whether we will live like immortals, or like the dayfly, dead at sundown.

The story is told of a college president touring the Bernese Alps, going by the Gemmi Pass from Badzeuck on the one side to Kandersteg on the other. When he reached the summit of the pass he looked vainly about for a path that would lead to his destination. All that he saw was a narrow, faintly-marked trail on the surface of the huge granite boulder, stretching down the steep mountain side. Such a trail it was as mountain sheep might risk but hardly to be ventured upon by human feet. Concluding

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he had missed the right road the pedestrian was about to retrace his steps when he spied a little Swiss boy about forty feet away. "Where is Kandersteg?" the president exclaimed. To which the lad replied, "I don't know, sir, but [pointing to this hazardous trail] *that* is the way to it." Without in the least realizing it, the boy had summarized the whole practical philosophy of life. If you are on the right road you don't need to see your destination. In such a situation—and it is symbolic of that in which we all find ourselves no matter what our vocation or lot in life may be—there are only three alternatives open to us: First, we may sit down, if our inertia be in excess of our motive power. Second, we may turn back, if our desire to reminisce be greater than our prophetic proclivity. Third, we may go bravely and trustfully on. In the sacred name of the latent possibilities that reside in each one of us, and of the constant residuum of capacity for progress that is present in even the lowest of us, I say, let us go on and take the ethics of an immortal being for our guide.

IX

MISUSES OF THE FAITH IN A FUTURE LIFE

The closing thought of the preceding chapter irresistibly raises the question: What is meant by the ethics of an immortal being? And if our treatment of the most compelling of reasons for faith in a future life is to have any measure of completeness we must needs devote a final chapter to this practical moral issue, the kind of daily living that devolves on one who has found in moral experience the strongest basis for his belief in immortality, who feels forced by the logic of his thought to see in immortality an *ethical* necessity.

But before addressing ourselves to this closing question, there are certain inferences which I fear may have been drawn from one or another statement made in the preceding chapter, against which I would fain put you on your guard. These possible inferences are: First, that devotion to the moral life is conditioned by anticipation of immortality. Second, that im-

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mortality may be made a motive for right living. Third, that life is not worth living unless there be a hereafter. Fourth, that immortality is solely for those who earn it.

To avert the possibility of misunderstanding and to clarify our thought upon these four points, permit me to speak briefly upon each in turn.

1. To make expectation of personal survival of death a condition of moral living must be set down as a deplorable misuse of the faith in a life to come.

In his first letter to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul expressed himself in unqualified terms on this relation of morality to immortality. He took the position that unless there be life after death men are warranted in living like animals. His precise words are these: "If the dead be not raised let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die."

The Roman Catholic, W. H. Mallock, in his book, "Is Life Worth Living," expresses his agreement with the Apostle's position and contends that "the only reason why we should behave ourselves here on earth is that the Almighty has prepared a future for us in which it will go hard with us if we do not."

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Similarly, the free-thinker, Goldwin Smith, took the position that a "moral interregnum" would ensue were the belief in a hereafter to disappear. To the transcendentalist, Max Müller, the moral life without immortality was "like an arch resting on one pillar, or like a bridge that ends in an abyss."

Many a college student and young business man, echoing Paul's proposition, asks in all seriousness, "Suppose I do gamble and drink, suppose I am somewhat loose in my relations with men and with women, what difference can it make, if there be no hereafter?" Well, both from a selfish and from an unselfish standpoint it makes a vast difference. Both physical and moral health, longevity and real welfare are conditioned by moral living as the experience of centuries has proved and nowhere perhaps so forcefully exemplified as in "Faust."

From the unselfish standpoint it makes a great difference whether or not we choose the moral life because our life is our influence. "We live in our radiations." The helpfulness of our influence is the measure of our living. The man who lives the immoral life in secret may fancy himself exempt in this respect, but

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private vices are public nuisances in that they are clogs in the wheel of social progress.

When Frederick Robertson was agonizing in the dungeon of doubt over the existence of God and the reality of a future life, he came at last to the noble conclusion that "on any theory it is better to be brave than cowardly, truthful than dishonest, pure than immoral, generous than selfish." And on the basis of this provisional morality he eventually built up a new and grander faith than any he had held before. Find me the man who, with no forethought regarding his personal survival of death, has tasted the sweetness of human helpfulness, of pure disinterested service and self-sacrifice, and who will say that he would have acted differently had he been persuaded that there is no future life. There is a joy which is more than happiness, a peace that defies description, in the life of service lived wholly apart from considerations of a hereafter. To make morality dependent on immortality is to degrade both; what is more, it is absurd. Were I a dayfly, I should naturally put as much as possible into my day. Were this the be-all and end-all of our life here, morality would still be the means of maintaining the social order, the means of real-

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izing the fullest life possible. The man who cannot put the faith in a hereafter to better use than a bribe to selfishness does not deserve to have the faith. Nay, more, when morality is thus degraded the noblest argument for immortality is gone. For what is this but the inconceivability of the extinction of an unselfish soul, whereas the extinction of creatures who could not keep the moral law except for the prize of immortality is not at all inconceivable. There is something morally binding in sympathy, love, and sacrifice, regardless of what happens to us after death, and the stars in heaven are not so grand as man acting in obedience to this pure and perfect impulse. We owe it to ourselves as self-respecting beings, we owe it to our fellow-men of today, and to the generations yet to be, to make the most possible out of ourselves, no matter what the ultimate far-off issue of it all may be. By so doing, we cancel part of our debt to the past. The welfare and happiness of future ages depends in some measure on each one of us and I, for one, would rather live a helpful, serviceful life, knowing this is to be the end of it all, than to live a mean, selfish, sensual life just because there is to be no personal immortality. At the same time one is

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entitled to believe that this age-long struggle toward the ever better, which is evolution, will not end in chaos but rather culminate in something that shall prove the process to have been worth while, and that for human souls this something will be *at least as good as* personal immortality. Thus, over against the demoralizing doctrine of the Apostle Paul which makes immortality the *sine quā non* of moral behavior, we would set the saying of the scientist Clifford: "Do I seem to say; let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die? Far from it, on the contrary I say, let us take hands and help, for this day, we are alive together." And with this inspiriting utterance we may couple the memorable remark of Charles Darwin, "The whole subject [immortality] is beyond the scope of man's intellect; but man can do his duty." To bolster up morality by appeal to what is still an uncertainty and may, perchance, prove to be an illusion, is unwise and imprudent, to say the least. Paul's assertion that finite beings cannot live the moral life except by keeping an eye on another world beyond is effectively contradicted by the remark of the Hegelian Bradley to the effect that it would be "a mere detail to the universe" if human beings were in such a condition that they

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must deteriorate unless they believe in a hereafter. "It is a rule," he says, "that a species of beings out of agreement with their environment should deteriorate, and it is well for them to make way for another race constituted more rationally and happily." If morality will not work without satisfaction being afforded to the demand for a future life, we must answer: So much the worse for morality which thereby proves itself desperately in need of reformed concepts.

Why should life be deemed mean because it is brief or why should we be thought disinclined to live other than as animals unless there be for us a "second life"? Surely we must look upon Paul as having perpetrated a gross libel on man's moral nature when he attributed to all mankind surrender of morality if immortality be not guaranteed.

Twenty centuries before Paul an unknown Hindu seer proclaimed a nobler standard of ethical behavior in words as exalting as Paul's are degrading. "Virtue is what a man owes to himself and though there were no God to punish and no Heaven to reward virtue would none the less be the binding law of life." Nor can it be questioned that there are many peo-

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ple capable of fulfilling every demand of morality though they believe that death ends all. On the other hand it may be questioned whether a moral life that has reached the stage of pure disinterestedness can long maintain its high enthusiasms and evolutions of conduct without the religious idealism that looks across the gulf of death to continuance of its ennobling pursuit of the ideal. Still more may it be doubted whether much that is worthy to be called religion would survive if faith in a future of *opportunity for spiritual progress* were to pass out of human thought.

Tennyson went so far as to say (to his friend Knowles) that were this faith to prove illusory, he "would shake his fist in the face of Almighty God and tell Him that he cursed Him," so persuaded was the poet of man's need of the *inspiration* which the faith affords. I stress the word inspiration because Tennyson was averse to regarding immortality either as a *condition* or as a *motive* for right living.

2. To do what is right because of fear of future punishment or hope of future reward may be *prudent*, but it is not *moral*. Yet Jesus, if he has been correctly reported and the meaning of his words is not misunderstood, frequently

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appealed to these sentiments of hope and fear when bidding men live the moral life. Again and again in the Synoptic Gospels we meet this misuse of the faith in man's survival of death. "Do good and your reward shall be great." "Do good to them that hate you else have ye no reward from your Father which is in Heaven." "Rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in Heaven." "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them else have ye no reward from your Father which is in Heaven." So also the author of the epistle to the Hebrews bids his readers "run with patience the race that is set before them, looking unto Jesus, who *for the sake of* the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame." No one, I am sure, will construe the quoting of these passages as intended to cast a slur on their authors. Nothing could be further from my purpose. They simply show how, in the preaching of the first century, the thought of the hereafter was made a motive for right living. No sooner was Christianity ecclesiastically organized than it laid special emphasis on this phase of Christian ethics and in the sixteenth century it was deliberately shaped into a business proposition. Seats in Heaven were

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made purchasable and escape from Hell was guaranteed on payment of a stipulated fee. Real estate was exchanged for salvation. Promissory notes were presented to priests in return for reserved seats in the kingdom beyond the skies. Collateral security in the form of extra masses and aves was offered to those who could turn into the papal treasury a goodly portion of their wealth. Thus did ministers of the Christian religion trade upon the hopes and fears of their subjects. Leo X wanted to complete the building of St. Peter's in Rome and, as there were no funds available, he put immortality into the market, making admission to Heaven depend on a contribution to the building fund. This outrage it was that incensed the hearts of Wesel and Wessel, of John Goch and Martin Luther, and precipitated the Protestant Reformation. Better, thought these reformers, that the hope of immortality be blotted out than that it be subjected to such unhallowed, unscrupulous, papal schemes. Better that the faith in a future life be abolished than that it be identified with such sordid aims and ends. To be sure these grosser forms of the abuse of the faith in immortality have become a memory, but the abuse itself is far from

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extinct. We see it, for example, in the theological appeals of the Salvation Army and in the peroration of many an orthodox sermon. Over against the Christian's resorting to Heaven and Hell in his plea for moral living, I would put the noble apothegm of the Roman scriptures: "We do not love virtue because it gives us pleasure, but it gives us pleasure because we love it. The wise man will not sin, though both gods and men overlook his deed, because it is not through fear of punishment that he abstains from sin. Fearless pleasure is his who knows the laws of God and rejoices in this life without any concern as to what the future may bring."

It may be worth while in passing to note that the popular conception of the efficacy of the appeal to Hell is fallacious. People deplore the decline and decay of the doctrine of Hell on the ground that it is a most useful check on immorality. I should willingly share this lament if I believed that the doctrine had been a powerful promoter of morality. But history does not bear out this assumption. The truth is, people were not better in the days when everybody believed in the theological Hell; they were not so good as they are now when hardly

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anybody believes in it. The morals of today are obviously better than those of a century ago and they ought to be worse if the belief in Hell had anything to do with it. But the fact is that it had little or nothing to do with it. Improvement was achieved not through that part of the Christian religion which is repulsive and superstitious, but rather through its benign and gracious elements, the personality of Jesus and his gospel of love. Love, not fear, has been the chief factor in the moral advances of Christendom.

Surely a truly noble nature never yet was led to sustain his devotion to the moral life on grounds of either punishment or reward. Surely it is a misnomer to call that act virtuous which is done for the sake of reward or to avoid punishment. Surely we must say that the man who is honest, chaste and unselfish because he expects future reward or because he fears future punishment is shrewd, sagacious, politic, prudent; but moral we will never call him till he rises to the plane of pure disinterestedness. To be moral a man must love virtue freely and not for the dowry she may bring. It was her profound conviction of this truth that led St. Theresa to express the wish that in one hand

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she might hold a pail of water and in the other a flaming torch, to extinguish the flames of Hell with the one and burn up the glories of Heaven with the other, so that men might do what is right regardless of all prudential, calculating considerations. Matthew Arnold gave expression to the same wish when he wrote:

Hath man no second life?
Pitch this one high.
Sits there no judge in heaven our sins to see?
More strictly then the inward judge obey.

The poet Longfellow celebrated the religion of certain sculptors who bestowed just as much care on the invisible as on the visible parts of their work, because, they said, "The gods see everywhere." But grander by far is the religion of Timothy, the Welsh stonemason, who, when it was suggested that he should toss off a bit of work carelessly because no one would see it, replied: "Ah, but I would see it." That is the highest piety, that is pure religion. To be your own divine authority; to let the voice of the Eternal speak through your voice; to stand in reverent awe before your own sacred personality; to be just yourself, though all the rest of the world be cruel; to let love rule in your heart,

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though beset on every side by hate; to be loyal to what you think is truth, even though it cost you the loss of social position, of friends, yea, even of family ties; to be yourself faithful, true, incorruptible, not because it will bring you wealth, or fame, or pleasure, or prosperity, or ease, but because you cannot be otherwise, because you could not lift up your head without a blush, because you feel that you are in this world to promote goodness rather than wickedness, because you want to make harmony where there is discord and beauty where there is blemish: this, I take it, is the very acme of religious attainment. Nothing so truly makes us divine and nothing in all the world is so grand or glorious as man living thus in obedience to the sublime dictates of his own soul. We repudiate, then, as altogether unethical, both the view which makes the hereafter a *condition* of moral living and that which sees in it a *motive* therefor.

3. No less emphatically, it seems to me, must we repudiate the kindred doctrine: "Life is not worth living if there be no hereafter."

To wake up on such a beautiful morning as was this, to see the beauties and inspirations of external nature in their countless manifesta-

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tions; to read the great and wondrous story of human progress, to feel oneself a part of that great, grand, forward, upward march of humanity; to be in some small measure a contributor to this progress; to taste, even though for only a moment, that sweetest, divinest thing in all the world, human love in its highest and purest reaches; all this is enough to make life worth living regardless of any hereafter. Whether there ever was a yesterday, or whether there will be a tomorrow, I am glad and grateful for the privilege of having been permitted to be a reverent spectator of these wonderful sights and an humble participant in these great experiences and aims. Moreover, concerning this question, *Is life worth living?* it is well to remember what Professor Adler has said of it in his *Religion of Duty*. "The question," he says, "involves a species of blasphemy. The right question to ask is, *Am I worthy to live?* If I am not, I can make myself so, *that is always in my power.*"

And we may add that just in proportion as we earnestly, ardently strive to make ourselves worthy to live, to that degree we become convinced not only that the task is one in which we may endlessly progress, but also convinced that

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the self engaged in such upward endeavor cannot cease. "By moving upward," to quote again from the same source, "we acquire faith in an upward movement without limit, and a religion which is to satisfy must be a religion of progress."

4. A word now touching the fourth of the false inferences under discussion. It is to the effect that immortality cannot be but for those whose earthly life has warranted this supreme privilege.

It will be remembered that in the preceding chapter special stress was laid upon the uniqueness of man in that he has power both to see the ideal and to strive for its realization.

True, the science of zoölogy warrants the classification of man in the animal kingdom. Yet we regard him as of a wholly different order from all else that is, "in a class" as Mr. W. M. Salter says, "apart from planets and crystals, flowers and trees and all the tribes of animals, compelling the belief that he belongs to a realm which knows neither dissolution nor decay." Why should we entertain so exalted a conception of man? It is because unlike all other creatures he can both see and pursue an ideal, see both what he is and what he ought to

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be and go whither that sacred ought directs. 'Tis in his capacity for allegiance to imperishable spiritual law that man's distinctive greatness lies. This it is that differentiates him from all other members of the animal kingdom and makes him alone the object with which ethics is concerned. This it is that gives rise to the conviction that his essential selfhood, which is spiritual, must be as imperishable as the spiritual law he reveres. But the question instantly arises, are we warranted in inferring from this conviction of man's permanence (as contrasted with the transiency of all else) the immortality of all men indiscriminately? Is it conceivable that *all* human beings will survive death? Must not immortality be restricted to those who earn it by *living up to* the distinctive attributes of *human* beings? Or dare we think of it as a free gift for all, free by reason of the moral nature and its unbounded possibilities, common to all mankind? In the best known of his religious writings, "Reason in Religion," Dr. Hedge devoted a chapter to exhibiting the Christian conception of immortality as conditional upon belief or upon character and by no means a privilege granted unconditionally to all human beings. By appeal to an array of scrip-

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ture texts the distinguished divine proved that the New Testament does not teach *universal* immortality at all but stands exclusively for *conditional* immortality, the author of the Fourth Gospel and the Apostle Paul making it dependent upon *belief*, Jesus conditioning it upon *character*.

Browning, in his "Toccata of Galuppi" raises the awful question, what has become of the souls of those pleasure-loving Venetians, who gave themselves up to sensual delights and are now dead?

As for Venice and her people only born to bloom and drop
Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly
were the crop.
What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had
to stop?

Matthew Arnold, in a noble sonnet, contends that only the moral life is equal to generating that energy of soul which can transport it safely across the bridge of death to the life beyond.

Will they who failed under the heat of this life's
day,
Support the fervors of the heavenly morn?
No, No! the energy of life may be

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Kept on after the grave but not begun ;
And he who flagged not in the earthly strife
From strength to strength advancing—only he
His soul, well-knit, and all his battles won
Mounts, and that hardly to eternal life.

Professor Hickson in a remarkably candid and free discussion of “Human Immortality and Ethics” contributed to the *McGill University Magazine* expresses his unqualified sympathy with the conditionalists. “Viewing the question from an ethical standpoint,” he says, “surely a general indiscriminate immortality would seem to be incredible. It would be unintelligible how a rational reality to which the attribute of goodness is in any comprehensible sense ascribable (and if it is not then *cadit quæstio*) must guarantee the indefinite continuance of all human beings no matter how stupid or unworthy and incapable of change. Indeed the belief in immortality seems all the less credible when we consider the character of some of the believers. Is not the demand for immortality in some cases preposterous and morally indecent, requiring as it does a maximum of reward for a minimum of achievement or even effort?”

Mr. Salter in still stronger terms gives his

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indorsement to conditionalism. "The current doctrine of immortality is weak, it has no moral fiber in it. It gives to all that which should belong to the valorous and virtuous, it lets every driveling saint and damnable sinner believe that they are going to live again and live forever. There was never such effrontery. If souls are worthy of another life we have reason to believe there is one, but when frivolous, vain, selfish, wicked people end their worthless career it would seem the part of piety to let them go into eternal forgetfulness. The only thing we can believe is that out of the countless mass of personalities that have been or shall be born on this bank and shoal of time *some* shall be accounted worthy to share eternity with the blessed powers that are over all and in all."¹

Dr. McConnell, rector of All Souls' Episcopal Church, New York, entertains the same thought. In his book, "The Evolution of Immortality," he adds to the preceding ideas the curious conception of a "spiritual body" created by the good soul during its life on earth and, immediately after death, worn as the garment of the soul for all eternity. And only the good soul,

¹ W. M. Salter: "Ethical Religion," p. 314.

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he holds, can generate this spiritual body and so become immortal.

Now there is one strong feature in all these conceptions of conditional immortality. They infuse a certain moral fiber into the popular notion of immortality by making it something to be earned rather than something to be had for nothing. Yet I am persuaded that on closer inspection this doctrine of conditional immortality will prove less tenable than the view it is meant to supplant.

In the first place, conditional immortality does violence to the noblest of all our sentiments—sympathy, tenderness, pity, love. Immortality for all or for none seems to me a much worthier and more acceptable proposition than immortality for only the good. Surely we want no immortality for ourselves unless it also means opportunity for every other child of man.

In contradistinction to Professor Hickson's position we incline to the view that it would be unintelligible how a rational reality to which the attribute of goodness is ascribable could do other than make possible the continuance of the stupid and unworthy. Nor can we hold with him the notion that any human beings, however

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degraded, are “incapable of change.” Without the postulate of *worth* in every human soul —i. e., value on its own account as distinguished from value in relation to other personalities—the Ethical Movement could not exist. And we ascribe worth to human beings not because of what we see in them but because of the latent potentialities in them. Consequently we are compelled to think that for even the most demoralized, because of a residuum of capacity for improvement which they are never without, hope must be cherished. With the Buddha, we would say, “Never will I accept private individual salvation, never will I enter into final peace alone, but in all worlds and forever I will strive for the universal redemption of mankind.” It is noteworthy that Mr. Salter found it impossible to abide by his belief in conditional immortality. For, elsewhere in the same book from which the passage just quoted was taken, we read, “I see in man, in every man somewhat of measureless possibilities, of priceless worth, *that* will live, all else he willingly lets die. Man is called to be perfect and the way is open toward an infinite goal.” We cannot therefore look with utter hopelessness on *any* human soul.

This is the gospel that Tolstoi brought home

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to us in his "Resurrection," forcing us to feel that just as no soul ever attains a purity beyond which it cannot reach, so also no soul ever becomes so soiled and sunken but that it is still equal to the task of attaining resurrection. And so far as our attitude to the latter class is concerned, I, for one, feel that we fall short of the claim which brotherhood makes upon us if we do not prefer immortality for *them* to immortality for the pure, if there cannot be immortality for all. If our feeling in the matter rises to the highest, noblest level of which we are capable must we not part company with the believers in conditional immortality and hold that a chance should be given those who were conceived in wickedness, born in sin, reared in a vicious environment and thus never knew what the higher life implies? Must we not desire immortality for those who, though they had chances to know the blessedness of temperance and the bliss of consecrated service and the ecstasy of loyalty to convictions, yet lost each chance as it came and so never rose to the level of worthy living?

Surely, if there must be annihilation at all we would have these souls spared. Let those who have known and realized the delights of the higher life, who have tasted and seen the in-

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comparable glory of incorruptible manhood and womanhood, let them suffer annihilation, if need be, but save the wicked ones of every grade and shade, if so they may come to know, in the course of eternity, something of the incomparable, ineffable joys of the moral and spiritual life.

X

THE MORAL LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF IMMORTALITY

We come now to the question presented for our final chapter: What is meant by the ethics of an immortal being, what should the ethics of personal life be for one who believes in immortality as an ethical necessity? What relation should his belief bear to his daily conduct? What specific duties would devolve on one who held the faith in a future life from this highest standpoint? The author of the New Testament epistle to the Ephesians, discussing the hereafter, concludes a noble passage with the clause: “And every one who hath this hope [of immortality] will purify himself.” In this sentence I read an epitome of the ethics of personal life for an immortal soul. The word “purify” sums it all up. Let me then state some of the ways in which every one who has this hope may “purify himself,” some of the respects in which life here is intimately related to and governed

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by the belief in life hereafter. Let me touch on three or four of the practical effects which that belief should have on the everyday life of everyone who cherishes it.

In the first place, then, I should say that such a being ought to plan his whole life like an immortal being and not like a temporary being. That is to say, he should pay special attention to those things that seem to him to have permanent value, train himself in all those interests that seem to have permanent worth, cultivate in himself all those powers which he believes will be permanently serviceable. Especially should such an one distinguish carefully and constantly between the things of time and the things of eternity. In the former class belong, among other things, wealth, fame, personal pleasure, social position and power—things that perish with the using; in the latter class belong knowledge, wisdom, love, will power—things that increase with the using. Very carefully and constantly should this immortal soul observe the distinction between those things of time and these of eternity, for the sovereign aim of his life will be to develop the imperishable portion of his personality.

Secondly, he will take a worthy and inspiring

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attitude toward the failures in his life, toward the trials and the tribulations that cross every human path. If, for example, the circumstances of his life are particularly hard and trying, he will remember that it is not the circumstances, nor the conditions, but the *way* in which he takes them and *what* he makes out of them that counts. Will they be hindrances or helps, stumbling-blocks or stepping-stones to higher things? That is the paramount question. If he be poor he will remember that the *man* is more than the means of livelihood; that the best things in this world are not the monopoly of the rich. Nay, more, he will remember, too, that the successful life is the life true to its own highest ideals, let the results be what they may.

What I aspired to be, and was not,
Comforts me,—a brute I might have been,
But would not sink i' the scale.

Above all, he will remember that this world is only a primary school and that the important thing is, not a cushioned seat in the school-house, nor a morocco bound textbook, nor a costly school suit, but to get his lessons and be ready to graduate. Should any pet project fail

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of completion, he will not thereupon grow sullen or morose. He knows he has put conscience and consecration into the work, knows he has used his immortal powers with intelligence and devotion, consequently he can face the seeming failure with a degree of equanimity and composure of mind and heart hardly possible to one who regards himself as merely a temporary being. In the face of any such unfulfilled power an immortal being will feel that he may rightly put the responsibility for a successful issue on some higher power. For his own sovereign aim gives him the key to successful life—which is so to live, so to use his immortal powers that the responsibility for a successful issue is shifted from him to a higher power.

He will rightly feel, as he contemplates the apparent failure of his project, "'tis better to have failed in the high aim, than vulgarly to have succeeded in the low." Hence at the core of his being there will abide a serenity, a calm and deep peace that enhance immeasurably the worth of his daily life.

And now I come to a third mode of self-purifying, one which an immortal soul will value as of exceptional account. I mean the reserving of moments each week or, better still, out of

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each day, for self-examination and self-collecting, because in the haste and press of our daily life, especially in the modern world, the supreme and sovereign aim of an immortal soul is apt to become obscured. Consequently he needs occasional solitude in which he can be a spectator of himself, of his aims and purposes, to see how it stands with him and the sacred facts of truth and right, to see whether perchance he is losing or gaining in the inward life—solitude in which he can ask: Is my thought-power more strong, do I meet pain with more bravery and serenity, do I control my temper and passions more successfully, am I more devoted to humanitarian ends? How else shall he be certain that he is progressing and not retrogressing save as he thus takes an inventory of his spiritual stock? Indeed, we may go so far as to say that only he who does thus review and appraise his life can be actually progressive.

And then, as the innermost experience of all—one of which, perhaps, he can never speak to a single soul because of its very interiority—he will turn his thought to that deeper life in which he feels his own life embedded, he will turn his thought to that infinite Purpose with which he would put his own finite purposes in

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tune. In the sacred hush of that spiritual solitude he will steep his conscience in the eternal Right, and renerve his own finite will by contact with the eternal Will.

Once more, an immortal soul, one who accepts personal immortality as an ethical necessity—will make the memory of the dear departed ones an inspiration, a second conscience as it were, avoiding everything that could not bear the light of those dear eyes that were closed in death. Too often does it happen that people who regard themselves as immortal souls act in times of loss and bereavement as though they were only temporary beings. We see it illustrated in the case of the young woman who had lost one very dear to her. At once the world became to her cold, cheerless, poor; her own life empty, desolate, wretched in the extreme. Who does not sympathize with one thus bereft and feel that very ache and pang of her heart is natural, inevitable, justified? But now, beneath the crushing weight of her bereavement she succumbs to the temptation to nurse her grief and brood over her loss. Is that justifiable? Has an immortal soul any right to let grief take out the strength and sweet usefulness from her life? Assuredly not, because the sov-

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reign aim of an immortal soul is to make the fullest possible use of all the higher powers, those most likely to be serviceable when the earthly life has ended. Life here in the light of life hereafter forbids loss of poise and paralysis of will power. No loss, no sorrow, however exceptional it seems, can ever exonerate an immortal soul from the duty of keeping the power to think, to will, to love, to help, in the best condition possible. As an illustration of this point, I cite the case of Fanny Kemble, the English actress, who lost her devoted husband and soon after his death wrote an exquisite poem, the burden of which is the inspiration afforded her by the memory of her beloved dead, making of it a second conscience that pronounced upon the worth or unworth of whatever she undertook.

What shall I do with all the days and hours
That must be counted ere I see thy face?
How shall I charm the interval that lowers
Between this time and that sweet time of grace?

I'll tell thee: For thy sake, I will lay hold
Of all good aims, and consecrate to thee,
In worthy deeds, each moment that is told,
While thou, beloved, art far from me.

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For thee, I will arouse my thoughts to try
 All heavenward flights, all high and holy strains;
For thy dear sake, I will walk patiently
 Through these long hours, nor call their minutes
 pains.

I will this weary blank of absence make
 A noble task time, and will therein strive
To follow excellence, and to o'ertake
 More good than I have won since yet I live.

So may this darksome time build up in me
 A thousand graces which shall thus be thine;
So may my love and longing hallowed be,
 And thy dear thought an influence divine.

So, too, it was with Lucy Smith in that wonderful story of her life with William, as told by George Merriam. How unspeakable was the loss she sustained when death removed her husband from her side! What should she do with all the days and weeks till she should see his face? Brood over her loss, indulge her grief? Nay, but lay firm hold on all nobler things, strive to prove herself worthier of his love, transfigure her sorrow by making it minister to soul development.

So, again, it was with Tennyson when death claimed Arthur Hallam, "the friend he held as half divine." In that immortal elegy and eulogy

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—if so we may speak of “*In Memoriam*”—Tennyson tells us that at first his sorrow was a “cruel fellowship,” shutting him out from association with others, but gradually the sorrow “deepened down,” and as it did so it kindled anew the memory of the departed friend as an inspiration in life, and soon thereafter he goes out into the great world of sympathy and service and even takes into his life a new friendship, which seemed to him, ten years before, absolutely impossible. Dante, during the decade following the death of Beatrice, wrote: “Whosoever she appeared to me in a vision, the flame of charity kindled within me, caused me to forgive all who had ever offended me.”

Such are some of the ways in which every one who holds the immortal hope will purify himself—some of the ways in which one will conduct his or her life, who accepts personal immortality as an ethical necessity.

Speaking for myself—and, as I have already said, I have no right on this platform to speak for anyone else—I believe that just as we all came out of the Universal Life, so back to that Universal Life must we all go; not, however, by the extinction of our essential selfhood, but by its ever fuller development.

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And even though no such personal consummation await us we yet may hold, with Emerson, "Whatever it be that the great Providence has in store for us when we die, it must be something large and generous and in the great style of Nature's works."

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